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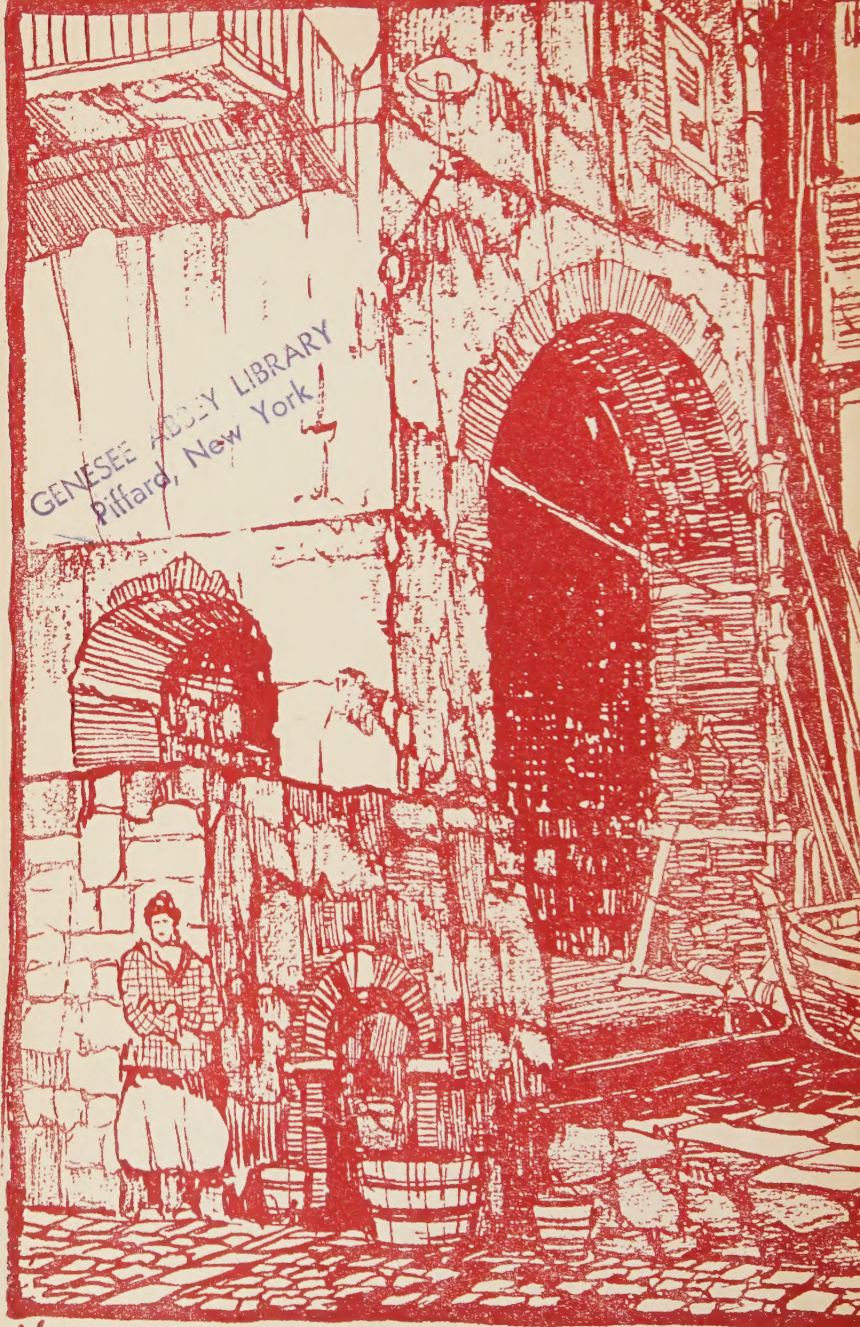
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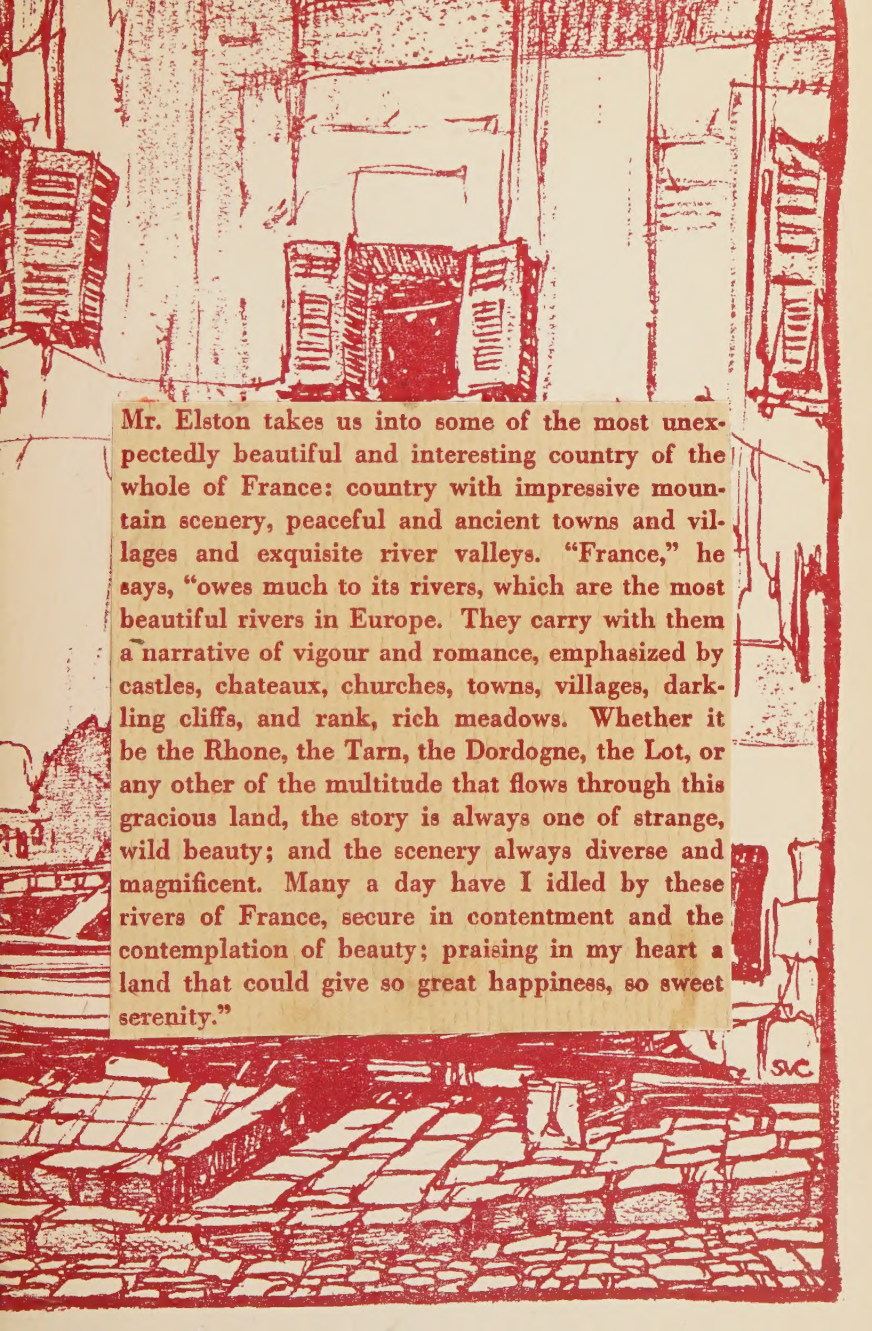
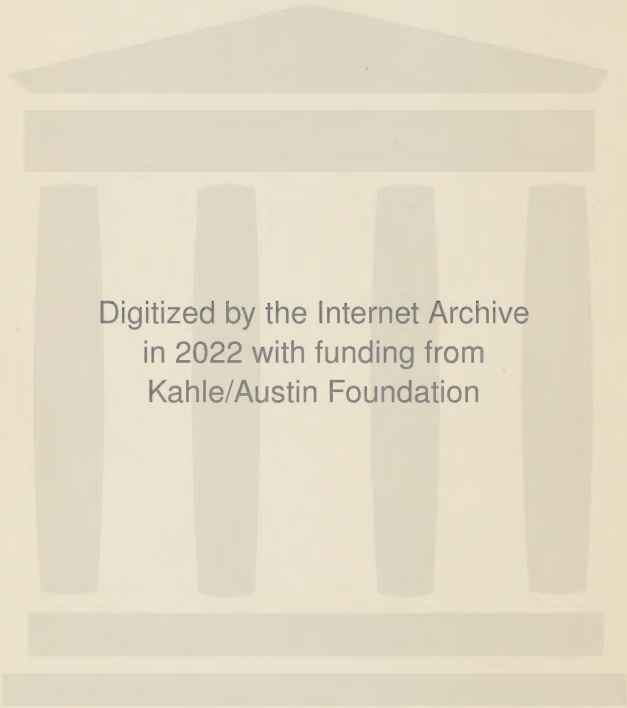


Mr. Elston takes us into some of the most unexpectedly beautiful and interesting country of the whole of France: country with impressive mountain scenery, peaceful and ancient towns and villages and exquisite river valleys. "France," he says, "owes much to its rivers, which are the most beautiful rivers in Europe. They carry with them a narrative of vigour and romance, emphasized by castles, chateaux, churches, towns, villages, darkling cliffs, and rank, rich meadows. Whether it be the Rhone, the Tarn, the Dordogne, the Lot, or any other of the multitude that flows through this gracious land, the story is always one of strange, wild beauty; and the scenery always diverse and magnificent. Many a day have I idled by these rivers of France, secure in contentment and the contemplation of beauty; praising in my heart a land that could give so great happiness, so sweet serenity."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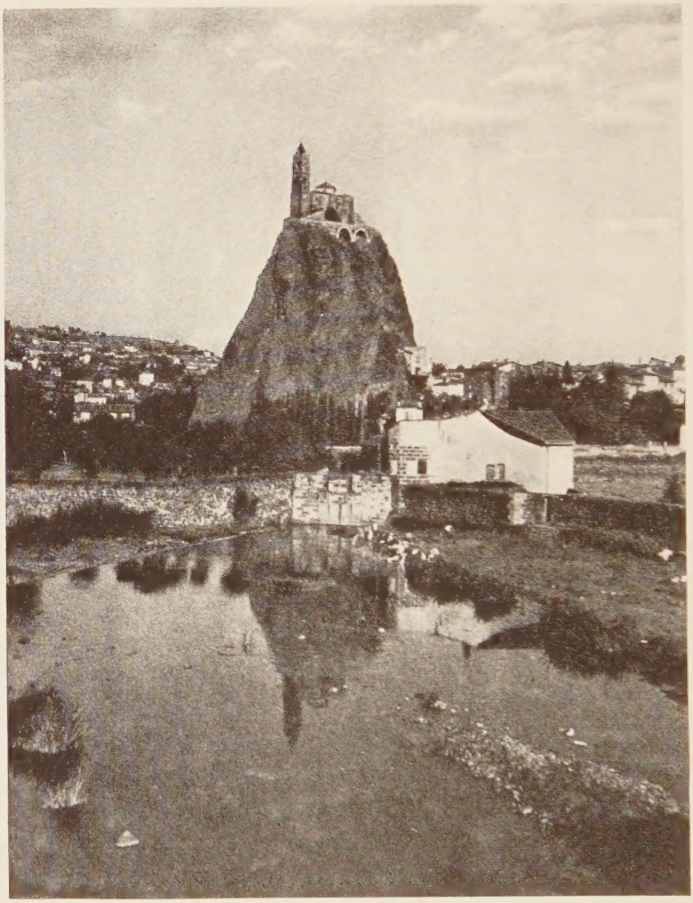

CROWNING A CURIOUS ROCK PINNACLE AT LE PUY STANDS THE CATHEDRAL OF NOTRE-DAME, A REMARKABLE EDIFICE DATING FROM THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH CENTURIES.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK IN SOUTHERN FRANCE

by

ROY ELSTON

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Off the beaten track in southern France, by Roy Elston.

NEW YORK : NATIONAL TRAVEL CLUB
MCMXXIX

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To

G. H. ROBINSON

PREFACE

THESE are travel sketches taken from my impromptu notes and filled out, where I thought it to be appropriate, with the lore of more adequate predecessors. To them I owe a considerable debt of gratitude; and I hope that the short bibliography at the end of the book will pass for an acknowledgment of that debt.

Here and there throughout the text I have referred to those sources which have been peculiarly fruitful. I should mention also, with emphasis, the records of the Congrès Archéologique de France, Dr. Müller's *Mentone and its Neighbourhood* and the numerous publications issued by local learned associations, as well as Hachette's *Guides Bleus*, which always accompanied me.

It is impossible to acknowledge separately those gentlemen from whom I have received hospitality and guidance during my somewhat inconsequential travels in France; but when I think of them I feel again for their beloved country what is closely akin to home-sickness.

ROY ELSTON.

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I

CAHORS AND THE VALLEY OF THE LOT

FRANCE owes much to its rivers, which are the most beautiful rivers in Europe. They carry with them a narrative of vigour and romance, emphasized by castles, châteaux, churches, towns, villages, darkling cliffs and rank, rich meadows. Whether it be the Rhone, the Tarn, the Dordogne, the Lot, or any other of the multitude which flows through this gracious land, the story is always one of strange, wild beauty ; and the scenery always diverse and magnificent. Many a day have I idled by these rivers of France, secure in contentment and the contemplation of beauty ; praising in my heart a land that could give so great happiness, so sweet serenity.

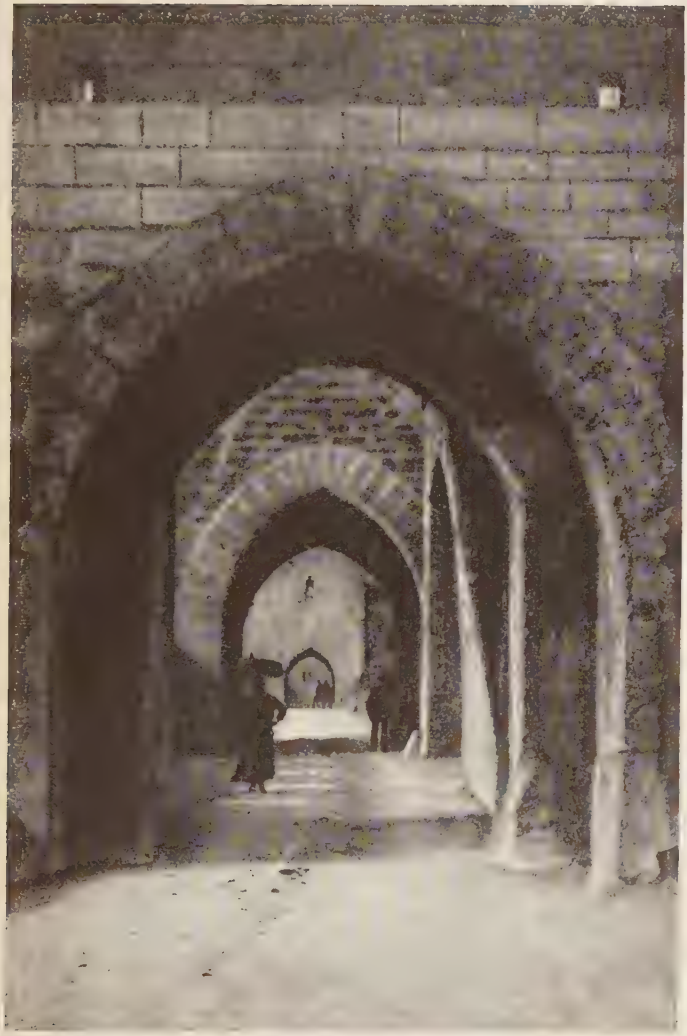
One of the first of the lesser rivers to attract me was the Lot, which I found to be a stream set crookedly in noble scenery. Early it passes through the shadows sent down by the great Causses of Sauveterre, and in a moment it is squeezed among the limestone cliffs of the Rouergue. Pent up and writhing like a serpent it presently finds a way through the Causses of Quercy, there to spend itself in swift, thin volume among the perilous towns and castles of a land which formed a natural protection against the ravages of medieval warfare. The road which winds up the valley of the Lot could never find a footing except with the aid of endless bridges and tunnels.

Here and there, however, the cliffs recede, to give the river breathing space ; and in these little breaks you find green meadows and open-hearted towns, like Cahors.

It is a very pleasant surprise to come upon Cahors. It lies upon a tongue of rocky land, encircled by the beautiful river; and on all sides of it rise barren, limestone mountains, with little patches of oak where truffles thrive. It bears the impress of a proud career from the time when it was known as Divona, capital of the Gallic Cadurci, when its linen cloth was famous in the Empire of Rome. Its houses are arranged as in an amphitheatre, with the old town divided from the new by spacious boulevards.

The first thing I did on my arrival at Cahors was to select a spot in the river to bathe. How very fresh, and cool, and invigorating was that bathe. A little lower down stream were several children, stark naked, splashing away to their heart's content; for though the water was brisk and cool the sun above was warm; and the general aspect of the world was of a sweet, odorous warmth, with bees humming; and the leaves of the trees were oil-smooth and velvety, because of the sun, which the brown and white rocks of the distance reflected as from polished shields. The air was charged with the smell of vineyards and hay, with the music of the river, of the laughing children whose supple bodies flashed back the sun, and of the rippling trees. The roll of distant drays, their iron wheels crunching on gravel, could be heard faintly, drowsily; the deep call of one peasant to another, far away in the fields, came down to the river; and a soft, indistinguishable murmur was borne along on the wind from the streets of Cahors. Beautiful France, how warm the earth of thy river banks!

The river attracted my steps for the rest of the afternoon, for here it is a quiet, lovely river, revealing, in its curves, enchanting views of the old city. As the soft, transparent dusk enveloped it, I saw the towers and barbicans dissolving, like blocks of amber, slowly back into the mists of their conception. But still their edges were filigreed with a pale flame, and the white houses by the



THE PONT VALENTRÉ AT CAHORS DATES FROM THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY. THAT IT WAS BUILT TO SERVE AS A FORTRESS IS OBVIOUS FROM THE HEAVY MASONRY.

THREE POWERFUL MACHICOLATED TOWERS WITH POINTED ROOFS SURMOUNT THE GREAT BRIDGE AT CAHORS. THE BRIDGE ITSELF IS COMPOSED OF SIX ARCHES SEPARATED FROM THE CURRENT BY SHARP PROJECTIONS WHICH SERVE AS A RETREAT FOR WALKERS.

quay stood out like squares of noonday light that had been left behind. The crenelations of the Pont Valentré—which belts the Lot with unexampled splendour—seemed actually aquiver in the magic of this fugitive radiance. And presently, as I stood, the darkness came I heard the gurgle of the river, saw lights spring up in the windows, heard the children called in from their play, and saw all the towers of Cahors arise like bars of darkness.

Tiens! How this land stirs one! It is a land enchanted. What use to rub one's eyes and try to be matter of fact? There from my window I see, in the early morning light, all the towers and barbicans of the night before; the white houses sparkle, the dark houses glow, narrow lanes delve secretly, mysteriously. Below, in the street, are pedlars calling, and Heaven alone knows what they call. The movement of the people to market and field makes a strange, musical rustle. Opposite my window is another window, and through that other window I see a pretty maid, who sings gaily as she hangs a mountain of bed-clothes on the balcony rails. *Tiens!* How this land stirs one!

I do not think anyone will dispute with me when I say that the Pont Valentré, which spans the Lot at Cahors, is the most romantic bridge on any river of the world. In that sweeping assertion I include the bridge over the Danube at Prague. It dates from the fourteenth century and consists of six arches with crenelated buttresses, and is defended by three powerful machicolated towers, with pointed roofs. It is the sort of bridge you would use to illustrate a fairy tale, just as the people who use it with amazing nonchalance are that sort of people. You see the bridge to its best advantage by crossing to the other side of the river and standing near the Fontaine des Chartreux, which springs from the base of Mont d'Angely. There you see it in all romantic beauty, a thing of

white and brown, pricked in with windows, gables, loopholes, machicolations, its mossy piers cleaving the stream, its arches mirrored in the green waters, its towers silhouetted against the bluest of blue skies.

There is, of course, a story. The architect commissioned to build the bridge called in the devil himself for assistance; and this the devil assented to, stipulating for the architect's soul. By some means unrecorded, the architect, a wily fellow, managed to outwit his satanic collaborator, and refused to hand over his soul. Thereupon the devil flew into a rage and swore that the bridge should never reach completion. And sure enough, one angle at the top of the central tower remained in a ruinous condition all through the Middle Ages, though that were a small loss to set against one's soul. The ruinous angle was, however, set right when the bridge underwent restoration, and an impish figure of Satan was placed there to signify that modern science could be more than a match for devilish activities.

The bridge is composed of six arches separated from the side of the current by sharp projections which serve as a retreat for walkers on the narrow road that traverses it. At a certain height in the piers there are openings in the form of gates, which seem to admit to unknown destinations. On the town side the first tower was preceded by an outpost closed by a portcullis, the latter being accompanied by a swing-gate on enormous hinges, several of which are still in place. All the openings of the bridge were thus solidly barricaded, and the vaults in the passages were equipped with bludgeons as still further protection.

The first tower, which is also the most beautiful and the best preserved, is surmounted by machicoulis. Its four faces are pierced with double openings and with loopholes of rather attractive profile. The central tower has none of these machicoulis, and is rather lower than

the others ; but the third is practically a reproduction of the first, being similarly guarded. A barbican formerly stood in front of it, completely shutting out the space between the tower and a little hillock on which the barbican rested. Even to this day the Pont Valentré is the most complete monument of its kind to be seen in France.

It was on this bridge that I met an old man who invited me to accompany him on a truffle expedition. We clambered for some hours, talking of this and that, through narrow ravines and up a stony hillside until at last we came upon a flat piece of ground where dwarfed oak-trees grew. The arid soil gave me the impression that it could harbour nothing of any consequence. We had a pig with us ; for these are the knowing ones where truffles are concerned ; and presently, at the bidding of the old man, our useful pig started snuffing about the roots of an oak. As soon as she began to dig with her nose, it was evidence of truffles, and the old man, seizing her by the ear, waited for the moment when the truffle should be revealed. If the pig, forgetting her training, grabbed the prize between her jaws, a sharp slap on her nose with a stick released it. To compensate her for the loss she would be given a few grains of maize, and as the day proceeded she desired nothing more, simply pointing out the truffle with her snout and waiting for the maize-beans, which were as good-behaviour marks. In this way we collected quite a valuable hoard.

The old quarters of Cahors are known as the *Badernes*. The name has a sound of antiquity which is borne out very happily among the lanes and dwellings which it designates. Here you need to wander idly and quietly, and so much the better if you have a sketch-book and can use it. Come hither in the morning, when the people are busy at their strange matutinal tasks ; and come at noon, when the bright light reveals its intimate beauty ; but come, above all, in the evening, when drowsiness

settles on it, and it seems to relax insensibly into the ages which gave it birth.

The streets are narrow and are paved with large flints. The houses are sometimes of brick and sometimes of old, blackened wood ; and many of them divert the water from their roofs by means of fascinating gargoyles. Here and there they lean drunkenly across the street, seeking each other's support ; and always their façades are fanciful, imaginative things. You can imagine some cheery old man, seated in a tavern, drawing up his crude plans and saying to his jolly comrades : " Well, how's that ? " Amid a chorus of laughing congratulations the design of the house is approved, and lo ! in the twinkling of an eye there rises yet another little oddity in the *Badernes*. It is strange how these dwellings, built so promiscuously, have lasted all these centuries.

The most delightful streets are the Rue Nationale, the Rue du Cheval-Blanc, and the Rue de l'Université. Near the Rue de l'Université is the Rue des Boulevards, in which is an inn called Cardailhac. Here I observed what to me was a perfect Renaissance window, beautifully decorated. The mouldings of the mullions, the little cupids, the flowers and profuse garlands, are utterly fascinating so pretty and delicate they are. Things like this you find all through the *Badernes* ; and now you halt to observe an escutcheon with beaten coats of arms ; now a monogram beautifully devised. There are iron-studded doors ; little signs of some medieval tradesmen ; dates preserved here and there, busts set deliciously in brown walls. In the street called *Donzelle* there is a lovely little bust of a crowned woman, who smiles so happily upon a world that needs must smile with her. One of the completest of these ancient dwellings is known as the House of Roaldes. It is a beautiful specimen of late fifteenth-century domestic architecture.

In this vicinity rises the cathedral, a gay, confident

mass, of a Romanesque-Byzantine style, dating from the eleventh century. It is crowned with pleasant cupolas supported by enormous piers. On the north side there is a magnificent doorway, with a masterpiece of twelfth-century sculpture in the tympanum. The figure of Christ is a notable piece of work, delicate and yet filled with an unusual vigour. Around this are grouped a number of scenes from the New Testament, including the Ascension and the stoning of St. Stephen. But, on the whole, the sculpture throughout the cathedral is not remarkable.

At the south part of the nave, near the west façade, is a door in the Limousin style, with a three-cusped bay. The most remarkable part of the church, from the point of view of style and monumental effect, is, however, the northern portal already referred to. According to Monsieur Saint-Paul, who is sufficient authority, this portal shows the most advanced expression of the particular type inaugurated at Beaulieu and continued at Moissac. But taken as a whole the work of Beaulieu and Moissac is far grander.

The interior is reached after you descend some fifteen steps. Here you observe a curious nave, quite plain, and overhung by two cupolas supported on pendentives, one of them being decorated with fourteenth century paintings of the prophets. There are some mediocre pictures in the chapel on the left of the choir ; and, in the choir, some pictures which are in no wise mediocre, but rather very beautiful examples of the early fourteenth century painters. They represent the martyrdom of St. Etienne, patron saint of Cahors, and also the legend of St. Spérie, the virgin of Quercy, who was martyred for refusing her favours to the president Elidius. The colouring is no longer very strong, but the disposition of it is still uncommonly soothing. There is a reality of expression in the figures of St. Spérie and St. Etienne which is rarely found among pictures in these parts.

The cloisters lie to the south-east of the cathedral, and date from about 1509. They are almost perfect examples of the flamboyant style affected at that period; indeed, such works as these sufficiently justify a style that is very often, and very ignorantly, criticized. One lingers over the graceful *nerfs*, the delicate sculptures still in their niches, the slender columns with lightly sculptured capitals, and the figures adorning the small pillars. There are also some beautifully worked doors, on which the surbased arch already appears, marking the transition to the Renaissance, a tendency still further marked in the chapter-house which adjoins the cloisters.

On the right of the cathedral is the Place du Marché, where Gambetta's father kept a grocer's shop. Gambetta was born at Cahors in 1838, and there is little doubt that France owes him a tremendous debt. The resistance he organized during the German war; the tact with which he persuaded extreme partisans to accept a moderate Republic; and the untiring energy which at length overcame the usurpation attempted by MacMahon's advisers, are three services which any public man might well be proud of, and any country grateful for. One hardly knows what to think of his affair with Léonie Léon, who remained his mistress until his death—accidental or suicidal we shall never know—and drew from him an amazing and unhesitating passion. Gambetta would have married her; but Léonie refused, as she feared to compromise his career.

P. B. Gheusi tells this little story concerning the great statesman. "Eugène Etienne, who attended the funeral of Gambetta's mother at Nice, relates a very significant anecdote concerning this event: 'When the coffin had been lowered into the vault, Gambetta came alone to the open grave, bent over it and whispered in a low but very distinct voice: "Au revoir, maman. . . . A bientôt."' These words, which I never forgot, six months later were

indelibly engraved on my memory. Had Gambetta, as it has often been said, received a mysterious warning that he would not survive this cruel year ? ' "

From the cathedral it is a step to the quay side, always a pleasant place in which to loiter. And pleasant above all because of the view it gives of this fine old town. You look out upon brown towers and terraced gardens disposed exactly as they were in the Middle Ages, and fragrant with the perfume of humble blooms. Most of the buildings you include in this embrace date from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. At the far end of the town rises the Tour des Pendus, its wide opening and great transverse beam recalling the ballads of Villon. Then comes the belfry of St. Bartholomew and the tower of the Palace of Pope John XXII, who was a native of Quercy. This is followed by the Château du Roi, formerly the residence of the Seneschal ; and lastly is seen the fine hexagonal turret of the Collège Pélegri, where youths as brave as they were studious defended themselves against the Huguenots.

The Huguenot uprising in these parts was pretty formidable. This is how the old chronicler of Sarlat records the beginning of their activities. " At the time that Nicolas de Gadis was Bishop, there was heard spoken of in Quercy, as in the rest of France, the sect called Lutherans, who, in the first years of the reign of François de Sénetère, changed their name, and were called Protestants, Calvinists and Huguenots ; and lately they have qualified themselves to be called rebels. The edicts of the king, and the severe punishments meted out to them by the courts of Parliament, arrested the progress of these innovators for some years, so that they caused no other commotion than that of discourse. By verbal disputes and secret printing they were able, however, to augment their numbers. But about the year 1560, seeing that they were regarded favourably by some of the great lords of the

kingdom, who, for particular consideration constituted themselves their protectors, they took off their masks, leagued themselves together, and formed a party confident to take action. They did not rest content with the establishing of their own religion, but needs must abolish the old one ; and so they killed the priests, burnt and pillaged churches and convents and created dire confusion in the land."

Village after village, town after town, fell into the hands of these pious iconoclasts, whose lust for destruction was as passionate as their lust for godliness, but Cahors stood firm against them, and even rebelled against Henry of Navarre, who captured and sacked the town after a stubborn resistance, in the year 1580. Thus are religions established, for the glory of God and the betterment of stricken mankind. The traveller in these days hardly knows where to place his sympathies. Here in Quercy, where church after church holds dumbly to its side the mutilated remnants of medieval art, you scorn the faith that had such cruel, stupid weapons. Down in Languedoc, in the great tower of Aigues-Mortes, one's heart beats warmly for those martyrs " whose only crime was to be of the same religion as Henri Quatre." Ah, well ; a little sympathy here, a little indignation there, is wholesome enough.

The buildings of this Collège Pélegri, whose students were valiant defenders of their faith, occupied a vast site. You get the best idea of it passing up the Rue du Four-Ste. Catherine. This street lies through one of the most curious corners of old Cahors. Its rough contours, full of unexpected oddities, its darkling archways, its moulded balustrades and a fine old exterior staircase of crumbling steps, have an amusing air of disorderly antiquity.

Coming out of this labyrinth you arrive at the Rue du Château du Roi, which is prolonged by the Rue des Soubirons. You are now in what was formerly an aris-

tocratic quarter. These two streets were in olden times the principal thoroughfares of the upper town. Following the Rue du Château du Roi and the Rue des Soubirons, or turning down neighbouring streets to the Rue Fondue, which is parallel with the other two, you come upon curious old things which are reminiscent of the *Badernes*. Here is a sweet little courtyard, with an old staircase tower leading to two upper galleries; nearby is a wide archway and the relics of ancient shops. Presently you come upon the moulded door of the Maison d'Auriolles; and now on a fine old façade you observe the four figures of the Seasons adorning the ends of the beams.

Continuing, you arrive in the district of La Barre, where rise the tower of Pope John's palace, and the belfry of St. Bartholomew, which pre-dates the fourteenth century church itself. Pope John XXII, who built the palace, was born in Cahors about 1244. He was the son of a cobbler, but in his youth was cared for by a rich uncle, under whose guidance he developed a considerable aptitude for law and theology. His reign as Pope, from 1316 to 1334, was chiefly notable for his feud with Louis of Bavaria, and his persecution of the Franciscans.

Near the Place Thiers, by the barracks, is a beautiful stone arch with brick cordons, surrounded by delightfully aromatic market-gardens. The arch is said to be a remnant of some Gallo-Roman baths. Beyond this are the old ramparts, with a splendid fifteenth century town gate still intact. Here, too, is an old barbican and the fifteenth century Tour-des-Pendus, which overhangs the river.

In front of the barbican there is a small square, called after Lucterius, a proud Gaul of Cahors, who was the last to defy Caesar in the fortress of Uxellodunum. So you come to the outskirts of the town, and look down

upon its beauteous antiquity, which lies so solid, so knit together by its very age. And down below runs the river, a broad belt of jade encircling the old, proud city. From the edge of that belt of jade, which you may reach down the slope called *des Evêques*, you see the river on one side laving the ancient walls, and, on the other, winding down from a pretty valley, through the verdure of soft meadows and by the tinted walls of high cliffs.

II

FIGEAC AND CAPDENAC

It was a brave, airy morning. A breeze blew carelessly down the valley of the Lot, that beautiful valley. It seemed to lay its hand upon the meadows, softly, smoothing the grass till it became a polished green floor, like a dancing floor. The river's surface flickered in the light, as if there were a million green butterflies upon it. I looked back upon Cahors. Its towers had been anointed by the sun, and its pointed roofs looked like pyramids of precious jewels.

I wished to go direct to Figeac. The little places in between I had visited on another occasion, from Cahors. I sat in a corner of the compartment recalling the pleasant things I had seen and done in those places. Here lay Arcambal, with its castle of the seventeenth century. There I had met an old cobbler, a bowed old man who hardly ever moved from his bench. He said to me: "If I had my rights I should live in a castle like that"; and I replied that that was true; so would I; so would all of us; but this is a miserable topsy-turvy world. He chewed a waxed thread and began sewing. He seemed a little sulky, as if my remark had given displeasure. Defiantly, I thought, he repeated what he had said, and then added, with unwonted briskness: "And it *shall* be so one day. It *shall* be so."

I drew him out; and this old man, of fully seventy years, proved to be sublimely confident that the day would come when the cobbler of Arcambal should lord it from his castle walls. For himself he cared nothing,

but he had a daughter. Faith! There was beauty! light and airy as a nymph, her skin pure white like milk, her hair like autumn sunshine, a voice that was music of Paradise. The old man kissed the air as he spoke of her; his little eyes glistened. "*Superbe! Superbe!* What would you, Monsieur? These are but oafs and louts, these rude-skinned maids of Arcambal. But my Hélène. Oh, Holy Mother, she is in thy image!" The cobbler lowered his eyes, shrugged his shoulders and began sewing vigorously, muttering incoherently to himself. It seemed that his ambition to possess a fine castle was wholly that he might place his adorable Hélène in a setting more appropriate to her beauty.

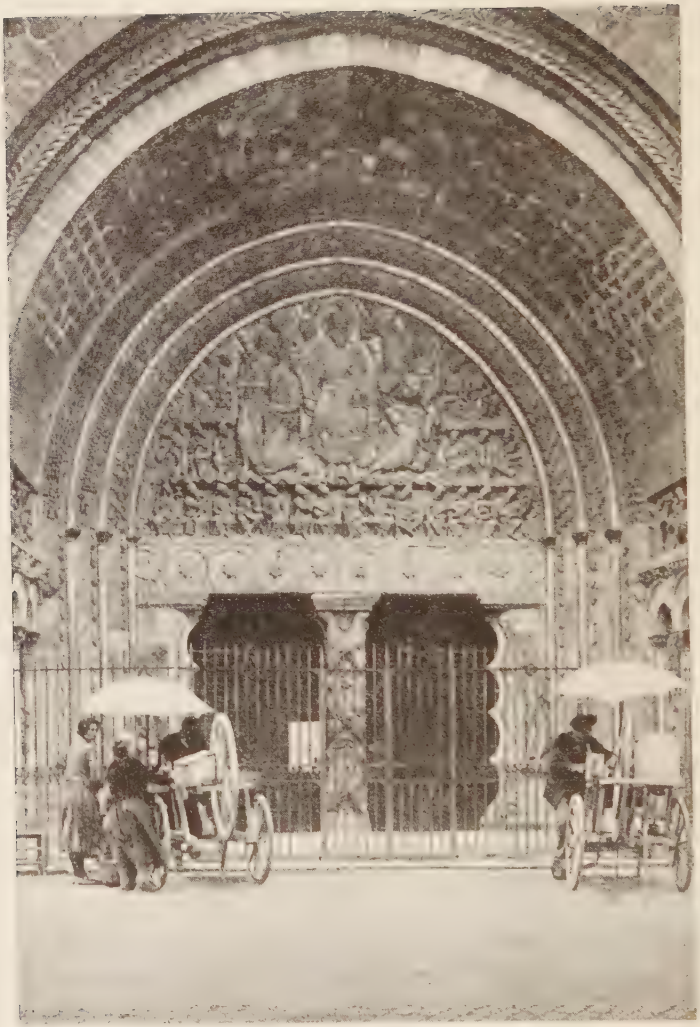
Little wonder that I conceived a desire to meet Hélène, and it struck me as curious that she had never come into the workshop while I was there. Finally the old man, still rather sulky, agreed that I might see her. Instead of calling her as I had expected, he rose from the old bench and led me through a little door to a narrow dark staircase, the sides of which were covered with ages of filth, even as the steps themselves sent up a cloud of dust with each ascending foot. The old cobbler paused for breath at a little landing, and then, unlocking a door, directed me into a tiny attic meagrely lit by a narrow slit which served as a window. Through this narrow slit came a bar of soft radiance that lay across a small bed in which a figure could be seen.

The old man turned to me. I have never seen pride and adoration so touchingly expressed as in this man's withered face. He swept his arm to the figure on the bed, and in a strangely deep voice he uttered:

Voilà! Hélène!

The figure, its skin truly white as milk, smiled wanly. It did not rise because its legs were withered and useless. The bones of her cheek stuck horribly through that white skin. Her mouth was twisted, and of hair

MOST OF THE CHARM OF FIGEAC LIES IN ITS NUMEROUS OLD HOUSES DATING FROM THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES. SEVERAL VENERABLE BRIDGES SPAN THE RIVER CÉLÉ.



THE TWELFTH CENTURY PORTAL OF THE CHURCH OF ST. PIERRE AT MOISSAC IS RICHLY ADORNED WITH STATUES AND BAS-RELIEFS.

there was nothing but a few clotted curls, lustreless and thin. One arm lay above the dusty coverlet, and seemed without strength to move except for a slight twitching of the fingers. It was a terrible sight there in that dark little room, with a candle spluttering before the image of Christ, and the odour of illness rising faintly like a miasma. But even I could see what the old cobbler saw! A creature of infinite beauty, delicate as light, pure as a star. I could see it in the two large eyes of Hélène. They were deep, and brown, and filled with a light more radiant than the sun, more gentle than the moon, and softer than the stars. Those eyes were very miracles. "Oh, Holy Mother, in thy image is my Hélène!" And I understood that triumphant cry; I understood why that old, deranged man still hankered after castles.

Now, as I passed on my way to Figeac, I wondered if Hélène was in her castle. Almost certainly, I think. In a castle where the glory of God shines by day and night.

After Arcambal comes Vers, dominated by two high plateaux between which the river runs. Opposite Vers is the old Château de Biars, and some five or six miles away is the best-preserved Gaulish oppidum in France, with masonry laid as described by Caesar. We pass St. Crepin, a little place which does not matter; and then Conduché, where the Célé joins the Lot. That valley, the Célé, is one of the most beautiful in all these parts, and is perhaps the pleasantest route to Figeac, a distance of nineteen miles.

Among the picturesque defiles of this valley are several natural strongholds which formed, from time to time, the hiding-place of those 'English' freebooters who so harassed Quercy during and after the English occupation of the land. By adding somewhat to the natural strength of their nests, these desperadoes were able to render themselves comparatively immune from attacks,

and descended at frequent intervals to pillage the neighbouring towns and villages.

One of these natural strongholds is still known as *Le Château Anglais*, although, as I have said elsewhere, the actual English were few. They acquired the name from the fact that they had served as partisans of the English. The Château Anglais is at Brengues. It is accessible only on two sides, with a steep rubble slope leading up to it from the river, and, behind this, precipitous, overhanging limestone cliffs. The rubble and the cliff are divided by a narrow path formerly closed at each end by a strong gate, one of which remains. The castle itself is like some monstrous thing of evil hanging in mid-air, though its foundations are actually set upon a jutting tongue of rock. Even now you may only enter it with the aid of a ladder. It was evacuated by the freebooters in 1372 on payment of a ransom of 120,000 gold francs.

Long before this, in the early thirteenth century, powerful brigands roamed through these parts, finding adequate refuge in rock fastnesses like those along the Célé. In 1231 the towns of Cahors and Figeac, the Viscount of Turenne, the Lord of Gourdon and the Abbot of Tulle, made a compact, which, for greater solemnity was signed at Rocamadour, by which they agreed to unite in an effort to drive the bandits from Quercy and Lower Limousin. The compact was vigorously enforced, but the brigands, who lay low for some considerable time, presently broke out again with renewed violence.

To-day there is nothing of that sort. The valley of the Célé is sweet and quiet, with nothing to disturb its serenity save the whistling of goatherds and the bleating of their goats. You may scramble about its cliffs with no fear of worse ill than the barking of your shins, and birds have undisputed sovereignty over all the wild crag-tops of the valley. Just so much the happier will be any

vigorous explorer of its solitudes ; for the Célé is rich in beauty, the natural beauty of colour and shape, the beauty of medieval ruin, and the beauty of flowers and woods. The little river itself is not the least of these beauties, and by its cool, gurgling water you will praise the day that set your feet amid enchantment.

Before reaching Capdenac, the most interesting place touched at is St. Cirque-Lapopie, which has some beautiful old houses riveted to a fine rock on the left bank of the river. The fifteenth century church, and the ruined thirteenth century castle are both things which it is agreeable to linger over if there is time ; but here there are fine old houses, churches and castles in such profusion that one is almost obliged to pass many of them by until one's time is happily unlimited.

Capdenac itself is a charming little place, which lives up admirably to the traditions of the country ; and at its Hôtel Moderne you may taste the best *foie gras truffé* in all France. The old town, beyond the Lot, has made no attempt to keep up with the times. What was good enough for five hundred years and more, is good enough for to-day ; and if you have any fault to find with that you must go over to the modern settlement near the railway station. But I vow that you will not have any fault to find.

In the Middle Ages Capdenac was an important town, owing its significance to its strong, natural fortifications, which were supplemented by ramparts, part of which are still in existence. It was one of the principal strongholds of the Visigoths, and then of the Franks. When Simon de Montfort, who spent most of his time razing castles, came to Capdenac he was met by more than his match, and gave up the attempt to establish an English garrison there. The English were, indeed, signally defeated in a battle near by. In the sixteenth century the Calvinists made it one of their most important strongholds, being

protected by no less than the great Sully himself, who was lord of Capdenac and frequently retired thither after the death of Henri Quatre.

There are some excellent examples of the old fortifications to be seen at the North, near the entrance to the town. Here are two pointed gates preceded by a barbican and a square keep with projecting watch-towers. The keep was connected with Sully's castle by means of curtains pierced by two posterns and further protected by a moat. The castle itself, as you see it to-day, is not as ancient as the ramparts, some parts of which are even prior to the twelfth century. These ruins are really the principal antiquities of Capdenac. The old houses, though agreeable, seem poor stuff after Cahors and Figeac, though in an inn opposite the church there are two beautiful fourteenth century fireplaces. Still, there is a very evident beauty about all these towns. One is never in a hurry to leave them because of their mellowness, the friendliness, and the great loveliness of their surroundings.

It was early morning when I made the short journey to Figeac. I walked along the valley, listening to the pleasant sounds of wind and birds. Now and then I halted to lie in a lush, cool place from which I could rest my eyes upon the colouring of tall cliffs ; and once I fell in with a party of truffle-hunters. Then came a little climbing, but nothing to speak of ; and then I saw the three bridges of Figeac, and the belfries of its churches, high up among the rocks with the Célé gurgling below. I knew that this place would hold me for many days.

The impression Figeac gives to-day is one which cannot be very different from what it gave in the old days, many hundreds of years ago. I say that because I have been reading the account of its origin in the pages of its chronicler, ancient Canon J. F. Debous, Curé of Figeac. He says, rather pleasantly : " Our town owes its origin

to men who, concerned rather with the good will of heaven than with the things of this earth, did search for solitary places wherein they could serve their Creator diligently and in peace, so meriting that eternal happiness which He has promised to His servants." In other words, like most of these towns, Figeac grew up around an abbey.

The lords of France, who had 'scarcely forsaken the darkness of idolatry,' promised their protection to these industrious monks, imposing no other obligation than that of 'lifting up their hands to heaven, like Moses, for the said lords and their subjects.' The monks fulfilled their contract to the letter. They 'did not lower their hands' except to use them in cultivating the earth and gathering in the treasure which the Lord had hidden in its bosom. Their time was divided between prayer and work, 'which succoured both their bodies and their souls.' And, edified by the lives and works of the monks, the common people who had gathered in their wake showed great industry and holiness, so that Figeac prospered exceedingly.

When the monks came first to Figeac it was a land densely covered with woods; and it is claimed that the word Quercy comes from the multitude of oaks that grew there, called in Latin *Quercus*. Whatever the etymology, the holy fathers soon cut down the trees, cultivated the land, and made it one of the most productive and pleasant in all the province. One gets a very desirable picture of Figeac in this account of its genesis; and I can readily sympathise with the old chronicler when he writes thus:

"The lands that were uncultivated and the heaths that were useless to the State were ceded by our kings to men who had the industry and skill to make them fertile. Meanwhile, the economists of our century claim that all the wealth of the church comes only from the munificence of the sovereigns, and that the State should be able

to take back in times of need, without injustice, what it had ceded in times of ignorance and superstition. But," says ancient Chanoine Debous, "we must not lose sight of the first state in which these lands, given by our kings, were found; and it is necessary to reproach them with the present condition of things. For in place of those woods, those heaths, the rendezvous of malefactors and wild animals, have arisen fields, vineyards, orchards, hills and valleys perfectly cultivated, the products of which form the wealth of the country." And I would add: out of the toil of these men grew also such noble towns as Figeac.

The abbey was founded in 755 by Pepin le Bref. It was united to Cluny in 1074 by Raymond de Saint Gilles, and at the end of that century was surrounded by walls.

In Figeac the streets are narrow, and you would hardly give them credit for cleanliness, a virtue one ceases to uphold after a lengthy sojourn in the French provinces. Sanitary people are also, very often, people with a passion for modernizing everything; and God forbid that Figeac, Cahors, Capdenac, or any other of these old places, should be modernized. Their charm lies in the fact that whole quarters, indeed, whole towns, are intact. An ancient building, however beautiful, when set among modern structures loses the half of its glory. Here among its fellows, in the atmosphere to which it has been accustomed, it seems to double its effect of lovely antiquity.

One of the best views of Figeac is to be had from Notre Dame de Puys, which dominates the whole town. Before you is stretched, in descending tiers to the river, a grey-brown mass of ancient buildings riven frequently by narrow streets and lanes. Out of this sombre monotone emerges now a red-tiled roof, now a white façade and now an old wall utterly blackened by time. From infinite little windows hang bed-clothes, carpets, washing

and what-not of Figeac's domestic furnishings. From Notre Dame all these little spots of colour look like beetles and lady-birds on the sides of the houses—tiny things of gold, blue, white, black and carmine, all very gay and cheerful. The whole town bends languidly down to the river, that flows greenly, coolly on; and behind are the riven crags that gave protection to the city in times of need.

The church of Notre Dame, which consists of a large nave of seven bays, dates from the twelfth century. The arcades, opening on to the collaterals, are of the same height; but because of the inequality of the bays, which gives diversity to the width, some are in *plein cintre*, while others are more or less sharply ogival. The upper part of the church is lighted by fourteenth century windows divided into two bays. The principal door of the western façade is interesting for the carved animals and foliage which decorate the band encircling the four archivolts. This is fourteenth century work. So also are the sculptured niches arranged under the beautiful rose window surmounting this door.

Inside there is a fine seventeenth century retable. One notes also the remarkable columns, with spiral shafts. There are several delicate sculptures and an acceptable Assumption. The Crowning of the Virgin looks like a copy of Italian work; but that is unlikely. It is not, in any case, a notable painting, though all religious paintings, put like this in their proper setting, are effective. The whole National Gallery in Trafalgar Square represents only one half of what it might be. The neighbourhood of Notre Dame is a place to loiter in. It all looks so beautiful down below, where the town shelves to the river; and it is pleasant to have the church up here, looking down also, as if to bless.

Near here is the so-called Palace of Justice, an ancient mansion constructed in the fourteenth century by the

family of Balines. It was sold to the consuls of the town soon after it was built. In 1379, after the death of Edward III, this beautiful house was sold for the sum of four hundred francs, which seems little enough in these days. You entered this mansion by several vaulted gates, and, of the interior, the most striking room is that known as the Salle Saint-Fargeau. But I think I like the smaller houses, of this and earlier date, with which Figeac is plentifully adorned.

There are some charming Gothic houses in the lanes running to the left of the Rue Gambetta. In the Rue Ortabadial, or Hort-Abbadial (Abbey Garden) there is a beautiful old house now used as a granary. The façade is lighted on the first floor by eight windows, joined two by two under four pointed arcades, and supported on delicate little columns of which the bases and capitals are formed of single foliations gracefully sculptured without mouldings. Even the octagonal chimney is a beautiful piece of work. Its clapper is supported by little columns with gaily-ornamented capitals.

There is also a very gracious old house in the Place Champollion, near which, in a blind alley, is the house where the celebrated Egyptologist, Jean François Champollion, the first in modern times to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics, was born. Another old house, near some kindergarten schools, shows six Romanesque windows of the transition period. In the Rue de la Poste and the Rue Grifoul are some pretty structures of the thirteenth century, one of which is adjacent to a square, battlemented tower, apparently built for purely domestic purposes. But for old houses, and other relics of the mediæval period, you need to wander by the hour among all the old lanes and alleys that run without rime or reason throughout the town.

It is little to be wondered at that these jumbled, crowded streets, wholly lacking in sanitation, were ad-

mirable breeding grounds for disease. On one occasion, in the year 1653, Figeac was ravaged by the plague for six months. It had been brought into the town by a woman of Gialon, who was accordingly held in considerable detestation by her unwilling hosts. Prayers for the cessation of this terrible disease were offered up in all the churches, and fumigation was administered in the form of incense, myrrh, benzoin, mint, lavender and dried onions. An old French writer, commenting on the frequency of plague among French towns, writes: "The English are specially addicted to gardening, and the city of London has consequently suffered much less from these epidemics, called plagues." I doubt not that our gardens have played a great part in the health of the nation.

The principal church of Figeac is that of St. Saviour, down near the river. It was formerly the abbey church, and is faced now by a delicious little square which is surrounded by beautiful elm-trees. The elms give almost an air of the English village. The church, in its lower parts, dates from the eleventh century, and an inscription on a pillar of the nave gives the name of the bishop who consecrated it as Gerard II of Cahors. The façade is modern, but the southern side of the triforium is of the thirteenth century. Now and then you come upon what must be relics of the original ninth century church. The Corinthian foundation of a holy water stoop, for example, and several ancient capitals in one of the chapels in the nave, on the left. The remarkable font in a south chapel is not earlier than the thirteenth century.

Near the church is a delightful old twelfth century bridge, spanning the river in three brown arches. There are two other ancient bridges over the Célé, and they give a very noble effect as you look down the river. Indeed, looking down the river, with Figeac banking up picturesquely on one side, was a favourite pastime with

me. Another was to stand watching the people in the market, and watching the market itself. It is a low building in the Place Basse, pierced by semi-circular arcades and covered by a wide, pointed roof. Markets, in this part of France, retain a great deal of ancient circumstance, and are still something in the nature of an areopagus.

One can imagine the groups of excited citizens gathered here when the news of King John's defeat by Edward of England was flashed through bleeding Quercy. There had been a truce between the two sovereigns, but it was broken in 1360 by Edward III, who came to invest the Prince of Wales with the Duchy of Aquitaine. He began by pillaging the rich lands of Quercy, which were nominally ceded to him after the defeat of the French king near Poitiers. This was not to the liking of the Querçinois, who affirmed that they recognized only the King of France.

The French King is reported to have said, "If justice and good faith were banished from the rest of the world, still must you seek and find these virtues in the hearts of kings." But, says the chronicler, "Edward was not so delicate; for he observed not one of the conditions of the Treaty of Bretigny." This was good enough for the dauphin equally to show scant respect for the treaty, with the result that he was able in some measure to vindicate his country's arms.

The Prince of Wales came in person to take possession of Cahors in 1364, and sent to Figeac his seneschal, Thomas of Walkafara, to receive the oath of fidelity. Only because they had been ordered by the King of France to submit themselves to the English did they consent to present themselves in front of the Prince of Wales' envoy. Later the Prince, having exhausted his funds, made a levy which a large majority of the people refused. Thereupon he attacked some of the rebels, and would

have tried his arms against Figeac, but saw that his troops were discouraged and so attacked, instead, the little town of Fous, near Figeac, which was defenceless.

The people of Figeac never submitted lightly either to foreign or any other illegal occupation of their lands. They drove out the English ; a little later they bought off large bands of English freebooters who had invested the city ; they gave fierce resistance to the Calvinists, who pillaged the place in 1576 ; and in 1622 came directly under the authority of Louis XIII, who had secured it from Sully. Eight years later, irritated by a little army of brigands formed in the neighbourhood of Sarlat, the people of Figeac marched out and hewed the vexatious rabble in pieces.

I hunted, to no purpose, for the house, workshop or any other relic, of Louis Siries, the engraver of precious stones, who was born at Figeac, of poor parents, in 1675. In his early youth he was apprenticed to a cutler, but from this he graduated to the trade of the goldsmith, which more fully gratified his artistic tendencies. A particular taste for fine jewellery early manifested itself, and his first attempts showed a remarkable ability in this delicate branch of his profession. To perfect his craftsmanship Siries wandered among the principal cities and towns of the kingdom, achieving distinction wherever he applied his art. At length he visited Paris, where the beauty of the work he executed won ready applause. The exactness of his design, the nimbleness, precision and extreme delicacy of the burin, made his workmanship more highly valued than the precious stones which were his medium.

One of his discoveries was a method by which he was able ultimately to communicate to gold so great a durability that it could be used for the same purposes as steel. This, however, was a secret more curious than useful, though, as his historian puts it, " It would be of real

value if one could cure men of the folly of fashion and the taste for novelty. By this method one could then conserve the jewels already made, and so, in diminishing the use of this metal for precious trifles, could conserve it for conversion into coin."

Siries later went to Florence, which welcomed him as only that city of supreme culture could. There he studied the rich collections from Greece and Asia which had been gathered by Lorenzo dei Medici ; and, inspired by them, began engraving hard stones that became universally famous. He published a catalogue of these, which circulated throughout all Europe. The Emperor Francis I made him director of the magnificent gallery at Florence, and in that honour he died, at the age of eighty-seven, in the year 1762.

III

ROCAMADOUR AND THE VALLEY OF THE OUYSSE

We came to Martel, where I descended ; and I stayed there only long enough to have some coffee, for a strenuous tramp down the Ouysse, to Rocamadour, lay before me. In the process of sipping the excellent coffee there came the recollection of that extremely misbehaved prince, Henri Court-Mantel, whose father was Henry II, Plantagenet ! Henry could hardly be called a generous man ; and his son found highly improper means wherewith to augment a slender allowance. He became a supreme thief, ravaging to right and left, and not halting even at sacrilege. Though stricken with fever, he pillaged ruthlessly until he lay upon his death-bed, shortly come from the plunder of the sacred treasury at Rocamadour, which had been filled by the gratitude of generations of princes.

He lay at Martel, in the little house near the Hôtel de Ville. Death was upon him, and in the approved manner of his age he sought to wipe out his black sins by death-bed confession and repentance. He called for his father. But Henry was still suspicious of his wicked son and despatched a bishop with messages of affection and forgiveness, and with a ring to bestow upon the dying prince. In the presence of his retainers Prince Henry recited in a loud voice the catalogue of his misdeeds. He then ordered them to clothe him in a hair shirt, to encircle a rope about his neck, and thus to drag him from bed on to a heap of ashes. There he lay, clasping his

father's ring and crying aloud his sins to heaven, until death quieted him.

From Martel the road lay presently over an arid plateau and then by a gorge in which flows the stream that waters the rich valley of the Creysse. Flowers and profuse vegetation lightened the path as it marched into Creysse, which lies among poplars and walnuts. Here the Dordogne runs broadly, though great cliffs overhang it, with trees at their summit. Always in one's vision are castles, and all the land is set for castles, with its witchery of rock, forest, glade and meadow, ennobled by the great river, the Dordogne.

I came to a tiny riverside village, Meyroune, where a halt was made to eat a little and to enjoy the silky sunshine as it spread over all this beauty. Then came Lacane, its houses clustered warmly together. Beyond, on a high jutting rock, which overlooks the waters of the Ouysse, rises the ruinous castle of Belcastel, in which the English are said to have placed many of their prisoners. Now the river Ouysse directed me, that broad, strange river that is lost to sight after ten short miles. How very beautiful the meadows and the little flower-covered streamlets looked by the banks of the Ouysse. On one side I stood in lush grass. On the other were bare, towering rocks.

This strange river, which is a river long before it reaches the sunlight, emerges near a small lake below an amphitheatre of hills. If one keeps on along the river's bank one presently reaches it, with a sense akin to awe; for this is a wild, unkempt place, with dark birds circling above the tormented features of the limestone crags. You are startled by the call of wildfowl, and pause to watch the royal flight of a kingfisher. As you continue on your way to the shrine of Amadeus the scenery becomes ever more startling, until at last you reach the savage defile of the Alzou, lost river that passes like a

serpent through a cleft in that arid, stony land, the Causse Gramat.

That is how you come to Rocamadour.

There is a curious little brown-tiled tower half-way down the hill, and then a few trees and a few houses, which look like one house, one long, rambling house, marked on its white walls with grey and black, and roofed in old, ochreous tiles. Between that and the opposite cliff there is a line of darkness, and then more houses begin, rather like the first except that they are partly rock and partly masonry. You make out the cobbles of ascending streets ; and you mark the tallness of buildings riveted to rock. There are little corner towers, slender as minarets ; and the buildings climb, climb, tier after tier, and then halt against the black veined wall of the cliff, that rises unobstructed, higher and yet higher, there softened by the deep green of trees and raised to loftier altitude by the towers and spires of Saint Amadour. Beyond that are only birds, and a few white wisps of cloud, and the blue, arching, sunlit sky. Far, far below, like a thread, the river runs.

That is how I saw it on a bright day, with the sun still high enough to pierce the shadows of these strange rock dwellings. On another occasion my journey was from Figeac, by the little railway. We passed Assier soon after leaving Figeac. In a land of castles, this of Assier stood out because of its extreme beauty, though more than the half of it is gone. It is a Renaissance building dating from 1545, and, like the church, was built by Galliot de Genouillac, Grand Master of Artillery to Francis I. Galliot's exploits are represented on the frieze which runs round the exterior of the church, giving that building a quite unusual effect. His tomb, constructed to his own design, is also in the church, and is surmounted by his recumbent statue, a pleasing, serene piece of work. He is further represented, in full relief,

in a niche sustained by pillars. Galliot had no intention of being forgotten. Medallions, like those on the façade of the castle, decorate several old houses in the village.

Assier is followed by Gramat, the station for Labastide-Murat, where Joachim Murat, King of Naples, was born. This is the wildest part of that arid plateau known as the Causse de Gramat. Through it runs the valley of the Alzou, which I have already spoken of, and along its course, as far as Rocamadour, is some of the most picturesque scenery to be found in the south. Round about Gramat itself there are several tumuli. A little to the south of the town, in the midst of the Causse, is what is known as the Gulf of Bede, an enormous abyss which seems to drop from nowhere, without anything to explain its existence. Its bed is cultivated, and supports groves of walnut trees which rise to a prodigious height. There is a crevasse, about a thousand yards long, severing the rock from top to base, and wide enough to permit of donkeys being led through it for the purpose of tilling the soil.

Below Gramat the valley of the Alzou is so confined that only in certain places is there sufficient room for the passage of the torrent, which is precipitated in a series of cascades. On one such spot a mill has been erected, and from a distance it looks like a bird-cage hung upon a wall. It is known as the Moulin du Saut. Not far away there is a remarkable dolmen, and, still farther, on the left bank, the deep gulf called Igue-de-Brau.

Leaving Gramat, it seemed to be only the matter of a few minutes before we reached Rocamadour; and by that time a darkness had settled on the land. Coming up to the town I saw the deeper blackness of a gulf, and, above, infinite little globes of light twinkling as it were in mid-air. Even through the darkness I could see the vast, rocky walls lifted up through gloom, spotted by those fanciful globes of light, to where it was crowned

by what seemed like a battlemented castle and the arms of a great calvary silhouetted against the starlit sky.

So far I have only given an impression of the town ; but what you see, as you approach the gate which gives entrance to Rocamadour, is this : in a region unspeakably arid, and, when the noonday light is upon it, of an almost livid hue, this strange rock-town is lifted up, upon the flanks of a cliff. Down below, at the base of a deep ravine, known in old works as the Vallée Ténébreuse, flows the Alzou ; that is to say, flows the Alzou periodically, for it is often dried up. The town spreads out, as much as it is able on such a perilous shelf, along the road which ascends to the Sanctuary of the Virgin ; and, following the extreme declivity of the slope are a number of houses. The ground floor on the escarpment side becomes the third floor on the valley side. High up are various old churches and chapels ; and higher still, at the summit, suspended over the chasm, is an old restored castle. That is what you see, coloured by a thousand lights, influenced by a wild, Dantesque neighbourhood, as you descend to the gateway which gives entrance to Rocamadour.

The origin of Rocamadour is by no means clear. But tradition informs us that Zaccheus, who climbed the sycamore tree, the better to observe his Master, Whom he afterwards tended and cared for with loving devotion, came to Bordeaux where he established a little hermitage. On the death of his wife, Veronica, he abandoned the hermitage and moved up the Dordogne until he came upon this strange valley. There are such valleys as this in the native land of Zaccheus, and many a monastery is thus perilously placed in Judaea ; so perhaps the wild Vallée Ténébreuse recalled the land from which he had been so incontinently expelled.

There was another reason why the saintly man should halt. For this place was an important shrine of the

Druids, who offered up human sacrifice to the mysterious Black Mother Soulivia, supposed to reign in the cavern-temple situated half-way up the rock. Against this shrine of paganism Zaccheus scooped out a little hermitage, which soon ruined the popularity of Mother Soulivia's temple. That temple presently became known as the miraculous chapel of the Blessed Virgin, and the black statue, set within it, was said to have been carved by St. Luke himself, and carried hither by Zaccheus. Some people consider it to be an original statue of the goddess Soulivia.

Zaccheus is said to have derived the name Amadour from the fact that he was such a devoted lover of his Master. Others assert that two saints are honoured in this shrine—Zaccheus the founder, and St. Amadour, a hermit who followed after. However that may be, this is certain, that in the Middle Ages Rocamadour was the principal centre of pilgrimage in the whole of France. Hither came not only the poor of all provinces but also great lords and ladies, kings and emperors, to do homage before the shrine of the black virgin.

Many and strange were the miracles performed at Rocamadour. One of them, as described in an old record, shows a sense of rather grim humour. Three pilgrims to Our Lady of Rocamadour were robbed near Puy by a thief who cut the strings of their purses. These poor of Christ were in despair at seeing themselves thus deprived of their resources, but the thief departed triumphantly, carrying the money in his closed hand. Now, on trying to open his hand, in order to count his ill-gotten wealth, he discovered that he could not—Divine vengeance had overtaken him. Alarmed at this miracle he informed a gentleman whom he met on the way, and sought his advice. The gentleman said : " I know how to remedy this evil," and, taking the reins off his horse he straightway hanged the man on a tree for the glory of

ONE OF THE MOST VENERABLE PILGRIM RESORTS IN FRANCE, ROCAMADOUR CLINGS TO A SHARP CLIFF OVERHANGING A RAVINE. ROLAND AND HENRY II OF ENGLAND ARE TWO OF THE MANY ILLUSTRIOUS PILGRIMS TO THIS SHRINE.

NOT FAR FROM ARLES ARE THE MASSIVE RUINS OF MONTMAJOUR, A FAMOUS ABBEY FOUNDED IN THE SIXTH CENTURY.

the Virgin and the punishment of the enemies of Christ. Then he returned the money to the pilgrims.

Roland was one of the first of the illustrious line of pilgrims who came to Rocamadour. He was passing through Quercy with his uncle, Charlemagne, in 778, and came to Rocamadour in order to " offer to the most Holy Virgin a gift in silver of the same weight as his bracmar, or sword." After his death in the passes of the Pyrenees the actual sword is supposed to have been brought hither, and the great rusty weapon now buried in the wall is claimed to be an exact copy of the famous Durandal, which was stolen by the Huguenots at the time they pillaged the church and burnt the holy remains of the saint.

Henry II of England came to this sanctuary in the year 1170. He came to fulfil a vow which he had made when the Virgin cured him of a grievous sickness ; and, what is more, he came accompanied by a great cavalcade, for he thought the Virgin's aid might be disastrously divided in the event of an attack being made by his enemies, who were in close proximity. Hither, too, came his rebellious son, of whom I have already spoken, but his coming was for pillage, not for solace or the expression of reverence.

An old French writer explains his exploit in this way : " The wars between our Christian king and the king of the English brought some ruin to Rocamadour ; but the son of Henry II, who replaced his father's affection for the church by a gross avarice, pillaged the chapel and removed the plates which had covered the body of Saint Amadour, and also robbed the treasury. But God did not leave this sacrilege to go unpunished and struck down the impious prince with an unhappy death. Those who wish may read of it in the second part of the *Annals of Roger de Houedan*, English historian."

A reliance in the Virgin of Rocamadour became a current faith among sailors in the Middle Ages. There

is a twelfth century treatise called *De miraculis Beatae Virginis rupis Amatoris*, in which the Virgin is spoken of as 'Star of the Sea'; and a frequent hymn sung by pilgrims at Rocamadour even to this day, is the *Ave Maris Stella*. A Breton pilgrim signed this statement in 1534: "I, Louis Le Baille, merchant of the town of Pontscorf, on the river Elle, in the diocese of Vannes, declare with truth that, returning from a voyage to Scotland the 13th of the month of February, 1534, at about ten o'clock at night, we were undertaken by such a violent storm that the waves covered the vessel, in which were twenty-six persons, and we went to the bottom. During the voyage somebody said to me: 'Let us recommend ourselves to God and to the Virgin Mary of Rocamadour. Let us put her name upon this spar and trust ourselves to the care of this good Lady.' He who gave me this good counsel and myself fastened ourselves to the spar with a rope. The tempest carried us away, but in so fortunate a manner that the next day we found ourselves on the coast of Bayonne. Half dead, we landed by the grace of God and the aid of his pitiful mother, Our Lady of Rocamadour. I have come here out of gratitude for this blessing, and have accomplished the journey in fulfilment of my vow to her, in proof of which I have signed here with my hand.—Louis Baille."

No longer do the great ones of the earth come to kneel before Our Lady of Rocamadour. But to the peasants of the neighbouring lands she is still a beacon of hope and a solace in their miseries. They come in great gatherings every summer, much in the manner of their medieval predecessors, with the parish priests at their head, waving banners aloft, and chanting and praying as they march,

"O Vierge d'Amadour
Priez pour nous."

They come on foot, in trains, on horses or donkeys, in

strange little wagons, filled with a great devotion, and unshakable faith. The pilgrims are always preceded by a vanguard of peasants and beggars who encamp on the great stone stairway leading up to the chapels, the pedlars keeping up a hideous din as they exploit their wares, and the beggars rattling tin cans and crying

"St. Amadour, priez pour nous."

And in the midst of this the long file of pilgrims mount, on their knees, crawling, praying, chanting,

"O Vierge d'Amadour,
Priez pour nous."

Two hundred and fifteen steps lead to the chapels. They commence near the remains of an old building which dates from the fifteenth century, and are interrupted, a little over half way, by a platform on which old houses are clustered like nests. Beyond this, a good deal higher, is the church of St. Saviour ; and higher still is the Chapel of Our Lady. The second flight of stairs passes under two large, pointed arches which support the relics of a Romanesque house, formerly a residence of the Bishop of Tulle, in whose diocese Rocamadour lay. It must have been rather a pleasant dwelling, more precisely constructed than is usual here. The windows, separated by little columns, are of a gracious proportion and lightness. One of the rooms is still intact, and is used as a shop for the trading of pious objects.

The sacred enclosure embraces a number of sanctuaries. The courtyard is very pleasant and strange, surrounded as it is by gaily fretted balustrades, fine arched portals, slender Gothic windows, unnecessary machicoulis and the bare, overhanging face of the rock. I know of no place so well calculated to produce that romantic medieval effect in one's mind which is often, in these days, scoffed at. There is the colour, the deep-

toned hues of old things—brown, grey, gold, porphyry-red and blue, to lend additional enrichment to the natural and architectural variety of the scene ; and the sense of these sanctuaries being piled so high in the air, remote from the shimmering earth beneath, like the monasteries of Meteora in Greece, quickens one's appreciation. Whatever your attitude of mind when you begin the ascent, you are sensibly overwhelmed when you stand above the world amid these chapels of the air.

The mother church is divided into two sanctuaries, each of which is practically separate. The second half is the Parish Church of St. Saviour, the architecture of which is not remarkable. There are some rich paintings, including so-called portraits of St. Louis, Robert d'Artois, Charles of Anjou, Alphonse de Poitiers, Alphonse de Bologne and other important gentlemen of the Middle Ages. Time has done what the artist could not —given a mellow richness to colours which otherwise might be a little crude and too assertive. The dates when the visits were made are frequently recorded, showing that the brave, blind king, John of Bohemia, came hither in 1324, in the same year as Marie of Luxembourg. The magnificence in which these royal pilgrimages were made was in itself sufficient to keep the name of Rocamadour green.

Under these portraits there is a long row of confessionals. They are besieged at pilgrimage time in such numbers and with such patience as I have only seen elsewhere at popular cinemas. The solemn peasants, a little out of breath after the arduous climbing, recite their misdeeds in loud unhesitating voice, so that all may hear ; but none cares what the sins of his neighbour, for his own are hurtful enough ; and all go out again visibly lightened and refreshed.

In the lower sanctuary, or subterranean church, is the Chapel of St. Amadour, a twelfth-century structure.

Here are represented such pilgrims as Roland, St. Dominic and even two Gauls, St. Saturnin of Toulouse, and St. Martial of Limoges, two bishops who, according to tradition, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Hermitage in the first century, before the great sanctuaries had yet appeared.

In a shallow cave barred by a grille and hollowed from the rock is the tomb of the great saint. Nearby is the strong safe in which the royal pilgrims placed offerings that were rifled by Henry Short-Jacket; and thrust into a cleft in the rock is the copy of the famous sword Durandal, the original having been stolen by Henry, according to one report, and by the Huguenots according to another. A beautiful Gothic doorway leads into the Miraculous Chapel of the Virgin, where the little black figure, so old, so significant, is enshrined.

This chapel has been completely restored. The interior is gilded and profusely adorned with paintings, while two lovely stained windows admit a rose-coloured light. Here is the little statuette. It is inartistic. It is almost crude. But for all that it exercises a strange fascination. For think of the heads that have bowed before that blackened figure! Think of the woes, the sadness, the misery, that have been poured, through centuries, into those wooden ears! Doubtless it was never carved by St. Luke, nor even by Amadeus himself; but its beauty lies not in itself, but in the pain it has quieted, the solace it has given to kings and beggars from the days of Charlemagne. The chapel is littered with ex-voto offerings, including a picture set there by Madame de Lamotte-Fénelon, out of gratitude for the recovery from illness, through Our Lady of Rocamadour's intervention, of the future Archbishop of Cambrai.

Superposed on the main building, hollowed in the cliff side, here, there and everywhere, are old chapels, little more than caves, which were constructed, or hollowed

out of the rock, at different periods between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. The faith which Rocamadour inspired, the tribulations brought to its shrine, the enthusiasm of its pilgrims and the enormous wealth of its treasuries, are still evident on all sides. You cannot help being awed by it. Call it superstition, call it what you like, its effect even in this day is tremendous. You cannot visit it unmoved.

Such wealth as was deposited at Rocamadour demanded, of course, a considerable guardianship, and the site, naturally strong, was still further protected by artificial means. The crown of these fortifications was the castle on the summit, which became a dwelling-place for the monks. Two roads lead thither, one a zigzagging pathway and the other a staircase which, says the guide book, consists of 215 steps, a number too great to justify confirmation. These steps pierce the overhanging precipice and lead directly to the interior of the castle.

The broad, zigzag road is pleasanter. It winds up the mountainside through flowery shrubs, revealing at intervals marvellous views of the Causse and the valley. At each bend there is a Station of the Cross, in which are some very charming statuettes. The great cross on the terrace half way up was at one time carried by pilgrims through Via Dolorosa of Jerusalem. When the *grande retraite* is ended, in September, the pilgrims file, singing and praying, up this lonely calvary, bearing lighted torches in their hands; and in the darkness it is very beautiful. The voices float down to the valley, like echoes from the streets of Paradise, and the flaring torches seem to rise, in unseen hands, to the very stars.

The principal building on the summit is quite modern, but the fourteenth century castle still retains many of its old limbs, though largely restored. Its principal feature is the view from the ramparts. The deep, black canyon, reeling off in the direction of Cahors, seems to

cut the world in half. League on league of wild, monotonous *Causse* stretches as it were to infinity, broken by a few oak trees, and edged by those stupendous cliffs which seem to have achieved their most grotesque form at this village of Rocamadour. It is an arid, sun-bitten, desolate world that is revealed; but it holds some perverse corner of one's heart, as if it were a sorceress, a begetter of magic things.

I suppose a visit to Rocamadour is really incomplete without the trip to Padirac, where vast, underground caves reveal all manner of enchantment. The trip is easily made, and those who care for these things will doubtless make for it. To me it holds no attraction. Let Lethe flow unhampered by my admiration; for here at Rocamadour they are the stars which call. Rocamadour! In the midst of the Causse of Gramat it lies, wild as the eagle that outsoars it.

IV

THE HEART OF AUVERGNE

THE impulse to visit this region came to me, a year or so ago, as the result of a book I was reading. The book is called *Au Cœur de l'Auvergne*, and its author is Jean Ajalbert, of the Académie Française. Monsieur Ajalbert, like most of his countrymen, cannot resist the emotional appeal of his native countryside. Neither can I. Here is a short passage, which I have imperfectly translated, from *Au Cœur de l'Auvergne*. I give it because I think it shows in some measure how beautiful is this land.

" Arlanc, Saint-Alyre, Chaise-Dieu, Lake of Malaguet, what a communion of gold and flame, revealed as a procession on the way to Le Puy, that star of the poet, with birches and poplars, beeches and cherry-trees, vinegar-trees and I know not what besides. These are all the pinks and reds, the purples and carmines of the palette—of fire, coral, flesh, of flowers and sunrises and sunsets ! How to find words to describe late Autumn's apotheosis in the climax of this day ! The omnibus-train, by its many halts, seems to show that it is in no haste to leave these marvellous scenes.

" Nowhere had I been in such a fairyland, in a riot of colours and shades so entrancing and delicate, with the vinegar tree aglow like a brazier among the firs, and the graceful poplar, pale like amber, shedding what looked like tiny yellow coins into the fabulous stock gathered up at the end of day. Then with great bowls of darkness night comes to quench these precarious flames, these rapid fires of an ephemeral forest."

Very eloquent, is it not? You may smile and say *fugh!* if you wish. All the same, Monsieur Ajalbert is not very wide of the mark. That is exactly how you feel, if you have any feeling at all. Then you must add the delight of wild, lonely townlets, of dim, ascending lanes that pass darkly beneath old archways, of castles, broken and forlorn; white châteaux gleaming from verdure full and rounded as an ocean wave; of the sound of bells bouncing softly from a high-poised village church to the valley below; of things incredibly old and beautiful; or incredibly old and melancholy; or incredibly old and desolate. Always incredibly old.

So be it.

We are a quiet company, not given to much talk and ostentation. That has been left behind at Vichy, where it is welcome. And I, of all the company going thus on the omnibus-train, am a little excited. I always get excited in a train, and want to talk to people, and to say: "What a little angel!" to the baby sprawled on its peasant mother's lap; or something of that sort, just for the sake of talking. Even the boy who carried a coffin lid, stuck half-way out of the window, failed to diminish my good spirits. After all, coffins must have lids, even in glorious Auvergne. We go first up the valley of the Allier to Châteldon. It is unremarkable, at first glance, this old town. That is to say, unremarkable among so great a number of obviously interesting places. Still, there is a lot to see. A kindly old gentleman, with a daughter blind in one eye but distractingly beautiful in the other—as if the tenderness which a woman distributes between her two eyes wholly dwelt in this one—directed me where I should go. "Thank you, Sir," said I. "It is a great honour," said the old gentleman, raising his cap. The little maid smiled and curtsied. And I thought, how good and how beautiful is France!

As you go up into the town you pass a cemetery on the

right, and on the left a church. There is some agreeable fifteenth century carving at the entrance to the church and inside it is musty and dim, so that an old painting, done on wood, looks rather like a reflection seen in a dark pool. You can distinguish the Holy Marys, sad and afraid, at the foot of the Cross. I was glad to be out again in the light. A road goes to the right of the church and brings you out by the river, at a point where rise two towers, relics of the city's ancient ramparts.

Châteldon in its day had fairly considerable fortifications and appears to have been of some significance. It had an important industry, that of cutlery and hardware, but those engaged in these pursuits became so harassed by flood and plague that they betook themselves to Thiers, and established themselves there. Nowadays the principal activity of the people seems devoted to the vineyards that thrive on the slopes just behind the town, giving to Auvergne what is, perhaps, its choicest red wine. There used to be a saying, *Chastel oudon, petite ville à grand renom*, and this has become enshrined in the civic crest of Châteldon.

What pleased me above all in this little town was the number of well-preserved fifteenth century houses, looking scarce a whit altered from their original condition. Some of these are built of wood, and some of stone, and though the security of the latter is more assured, the wooden ones are more picturesque. These houses, with their odd carving, and curved, squat appearance, are easily picked out ; and, of course, are chiefly picturesque as a whole. Their details are not remarkable save in that of the Maison Sergentale, near the covered market and the old belfry, the latter a square tower of the thirteenth century, with a round door, and terminated by a steeple soaring from a pointed roof. A little farther on is the castle, dating originally from the thirteenth century. It looks very well, what you can see of it, rising from a

verdant park; but there are all sorts of restrictions to keep you from examining it.

A luminous twilight seems to have settled over Châteldon, especially near the Maison Sergentale, and the market. Except in the matter of formal symmetry, it seems a very frail line of demarcation between this town and the rocky slopes behind. The old castle, the houses, the tower and the church, with the river below and the tall, rocky hills behind have looked a great deal in the face, and acquired something of each other's character. Here, at Châteldon, where all is verdant and the cool valleys near at hand, this mutual character is of a gracious, tender disposition. Very different from what we shall find farther on.

All through this basin of the Allier there is a rich fertility, which recalls the remark of Salvin—*la moële des Gaules*, which can be roughly translated as the land flowing with milk and honey. As long ago as the second century Sidonius Apollinarius wrote enthusiastically of this land. He calls it a sea of fertility, with cargoes of rich harvest; a land delectable for travellers, profitable for peasants and agreeable to hunters. And those impressions are equally of this century. Little wonder that the people in Châteldon's cool *place* have a gracious air of contentment and kindliness.

Such, then, is the scenery disclosed as the omnibus-train pants idly up the valley. I sink back in my corner. It is sufficient to watch silently through the window. My companions, peasants all, may do the chattering. So intently do I gaze that I scarcely notice how, when we halt at Puy-Guillaume, the compartment fills up insufferably. I should have alighted at Néronde. One has to pass things by. In this land one is a spendthrift, casting one's opportunities out of the window, in the assurance that just as many will fly through from outside.

That is how I came to Courpière. Away from the station were gently-sloping hills, bearing lightly the bur-

den of Courpière. All sunny it lay, the shafts of a clear autumn noonday picking out the whites, reds and greens from the prevalent soft greyness. There were cheerful sounds of dogs barking, children playing, drays creaking; and cheerful odours of corn and the grape. I ascended from the station to a large boulevard, which afterwards I found to encircle practically all the town.

Here in Courpière, as in Châteldon and—as I begin to suspect—in all the decent townlets of this region, the most agreeable features are the old fifteenth century houses. Not simply because they are of the fifteenth century, but because they are odd, and delightfully theatrical. The ramparts of the town have left only a few insignificant relics of no interest to any one. But the early Romanesque church I found to be quite unusual, and peculiar to Auvergne. Its remarkable character is due largely to the fact that it was half church, half fortress. A resolute, uncompromising old church! It encloses a curious fifteenth century sepulchre, but there is nothing else of any particular significance.

The old houses, reached through some fascinating lanes at the rear of the church, are reminiscent of the fifteenth century houses at Thiers, blackened by time, squat and curvy, with agreeable, saggy lines, and odd little carvings set at whatever angles there are. Just beyond this you come to a terrace looking down on to the pale green flow of the Doré and out to the deep green of fields, and on to the purples and blues and indigos of far-reaching hills.

It came near twilight when I left Courpière. The birds were settling in the trees, people grew quieter, as they do toward the end of day, children went in to their soup, and drays creaked up the ascending lanes on their last journey to the wine-press. I came down the hill to the station, reflecting that the people were wise to keep up on the hill. On 11th November in the year 1790,

almost the whole of the town was destroyed by an inundation of the river.

One of the best things in the neighbourhood of Courpière I visited on another occasion. This is the Château de la Barge, about two miles away. You see it in the train soon after passing Néronde, through the trees in the opening of a side valley beyond the Doré. It is one of the noblest and best preserved of the Auvergnais châteaux. It lies in a magnificent park and is surrounded on three sides by a wide moat, in which the water still runs. The high towers of the present structure are pierced by loopholes, and the oldest part of the castle dates from the thirteenth century though a great deal of it was rebuilt in 1517.

The fine colonnade is of this later date, and so are the galleries and balustrades, which are beautifully worked. The castle is connected by a gallery with the chapel. The lord who built this pleasing little chapel is shown in a contemporary picture registering his vow to undertake the pious task. It is a charming spot in which to rest, soothed by the light that comes softly through the velvety blues and purples of the stained windows. The family coat of arms is a frequent decoration. I know of no castle which I would prefer to this as a residence, for whilst it retains a spirit of nobility and haughty power, yet it contrives to be homely and full of a sweet peace, there amid its woods, with the Doré flowing softly within earshot.

It has been given another claim to significance by the verses of Chateaubriand :

> " Ma Sœur, te souvient-il encore
> Du château que baignait la Dore
> Et de cette tant vieille tour
> Du More,
> Ou l'airain sonnait le retour
> Du jour ? "

When you leave Courpière I think you strike the noblest part of this journey. At all events, there begins the noblest part, a land of opulent fertility, *la Moële des Gaules*, a mountain-ridged basin green-sloped and diversified with sturdy vineyards, ploughed fields, pasture-lands, woods broken intriguingly by long, mysterious aisles, clear, sunny rivers, emerald sweeps of meadow, and, where the basin rises to its rim, the fantastic handiwork of that distant catastrophe which changed the face of Auvergne and drove from the Allier basin a vast sheet of lonely lake-water.

The river is crossed. The little train threads noisily through thin passes, and then winds along the right bank of the river. A high, romantic little town is revealed, stretched above and below the Doré. This is Giroux. It has a couple of attractive old bridges, one of which, for a reason I know not, is called the Devil's bridge. A few more bridges, a few more tunnels, and then Olliergues is reached. I opened my guide-book: "Olliergues has nothing remarkable; its castle possesses no character; its Gothic church and its old houses have nothing interesting about them."

That is only partly true. At all events, in spite of such unpromising remarks I left the train and sought out the little inn. After all, I thought, here it is so beautiful, the town is so prettily placed, that I can do no ill by remaining here an hour or two. One is not at all times in need of remarkable things, and it is quite true that the buildings of this townlet are not of much account. A pleasant road winds through it for a street, the church pokes skywards from a dip between the hills, and there are trees and green meadows. The houses are generally quite plain; still, they are pleasant enough, with the mark of age upon them, and give the impression of a welcome warm-hearted if a little brusque.

On 19th February in the year 1577, at exactly three

o'clock in the morning, a detachment of about a hundred and ten men commanded by the Captain Merle, came to Olliergues. Very swiftly they burst into the town, and entering the first houses they came to, set them on fire. Awakened by cries of *Fire* ! *the Huguenots !* and by the bell of the castle, which was clanging with all its might, the inhabitants of Olliergues armed themselves, each in his own peculiar manner, and set themselves for the conflict.

The young lord Henri de la Tour, who was at the castle, placed himself at the head of the people and arrested the progress of the Huguenots. Soon the inhabitants of neighbouring hamlets arrived, and these united themselves with those of Olliergues. Their superiority of numbers succeeded in causing the retreat of the attackers, twenty of whom were killed. The Lord Montbrun, who seemed to be the leader of the Huguenots, was taken prisoner and executed by the people, in spite of their own lord's plea for Montbrun's life.

The Huguenots in their retreat were soon brought up against the inhabitants of Olliergues, Marat and Brugeron, and were signally defeated on a spot which came to be known as *Le grand batailleux*. But the damage had already been done, for the fire at Olliergues proved to have been very terrible. The inhabitants, restrained by the enemy, were unable to master it and a third of the town disappeared. Perhaps the chief buildings of Olliergues were in that vanished third.

Now the train rambles on. It could ramble indefinitely for all I care. This beauty and sweetness of landscape is so pleasing, so soothing to the eye ; and the sun sheens it all to a smooth, porcelain effect. The country of Livradois is entered. This is a region of some three leagues in extent. Here the mountains seem far away ; simply a protecting wall enclosing a cool, verdant flatness, with the river idling through it without

hindrance. It would be pleasant to walk through this land; and as the people are generous and happy-hearted, more civilized than those who dwell rudely among the hills and on the plateau, one's wants should be readily supplied.

Above this plain, at the foot of the Forey mountains, lies Ambert, very old and agreeable. Quite an important town it seemed, as I alighted from the train; for the closely-packed compartments emitted fully two-thirds of their odorous, gesticulating freight. Some of these French country stations are delightfully comic. A French novelist is a lucky man. He need only take a railway journey into the country to be afforded as many arresting, suggestive types as a good book could reasonably hold. That is not so in England where the people are pitifully, oh! pitifully, standardized. This spitting, shouting, whiskered, shapeless rabble on the platform at Ambert, clothed, as it were, all by accident, suggests to me the crowds with which certain Primitives filled their conception of the Adoration.

At Ambert I found one of the best inns along this route. It is the Tête-d'Or, an old-fashioned, simple hostelry, smelling of hay, flowers and good food, the sort of place that induces rest, especially when you hear, outside your window, the humming of bees, and watch the sky, scintillating flakily through the blossom of almond trees. Ambert, though justly called a town (it has been so for these many hundred years) has the atmosphere of a secluded, flowery village. A happy little town. It is scarcely any interruption in the sweet succession of streams, meadows, cultivated fields and soft woods.

Still, it is, as I say, an old, proud town, bravely flaunting its device, *Fais que deura, aduiegne que poura.*

In one respect I was disappointed. I had read this (admittedly in a very old book) of Ambert. That it lay

THE BULL OF THE CAMARGUE IS A DANGEROUS OPPONENT FOR THE UNWARY. THIS CREATURE IS ENTERING THE ARENA FOR THE CONTEST.

THIS BULL, AFTER MAKING A FUTILE EFFORT TO ESCAPE, IS ABOUT TO BE CAPTURED BY THE HORSEMEN.

THE CELEBRATED ABBEY AT LA CHAISE DIEU NUMBERED AMONG ITS ABBOTS AND NOMINAL RULERS SUCH MEN AS POPE CLEMENT VI, RICHELIEU AND MAZARIN.

THE IMPRESSIVE PALACE OF THE POPES AT AVIGNON WAS CONSTRUCTED BY THE FIVE POPES WHO RESIDED HERE BETWEEN 1316 AND 1364.

within high ramparts, the entrances to which were crowned with stakes iron mounted and finely sharpened. There were all sorts of loopholes, and little Flemish dormer windows in the ramparts, while in the interior three further ramparts enclosed a vast castle. The gates, called Chicot, Pascal and Lyon, were protected by thick towers, and a system of muddy ditches further harassed the approaching enemy.

That, it seems, was long ago. The line of the ramparts is now a charming boulevard encircling the town, and such remains as there are, of the fortifications, are unintelligible. So much that was fine and attractive was long ago. That I found when I visited the church and reflected on the picturesque ceremonies that once were a feature of Ambert's life.

One of these strange customs took place on Christmas day at Vespers. The precentor stood on that day in front of the Mayor and intoned the *Memento Domine David*, holding in his hand a gift. The congregation, standing near the choir, also carried gifts, which they brought from beneath their coats, eyeing meanwhile, with triumph or mortification, the presents of neighbours. The presents were handed over, the choir sang out joyfully the anthem *De Fructu*, and the Mayor bowed low, as a sign to the assembled people that he desired them to sup with him that evening. A very fine supper it must have been. I can imagine the congregation, a crowd like that which thronged the railway station, trooping off gaily to the feast and trooping back with no less gaiety if somewhat less balance. Brave, jolly, generous days!

Mystery plays were at one time a feature of the church at Ambert. The finest of these, written wholly in verse, and concerning the beheading of John the Baptist, was written by the parish priest. There are pretty good opportunities in that story for an imaginative medieval

citizen of Ambert. Perhaps that is why the performances were presently forbidden. What a pity we cannot take a retrospective ride in Mr. Wells's Time Machine, and be present at an Ambert mystery play, retiring afterwards to the jolly party given by the Mayor on Christmas Eve!

The church of Ambert, built at the end of the fifteenth century, is dedicated to St. John. A stage in its completion is recorded on the south door of the church, where the following verse is inscribed:

> "Lorsque la terre si fort tremblait
> Et que le monde en date comptait
> Mil quatre cent septante sept
> Ce portail ci commensoit."

There is also a very beautiful Gothic inscription on the lintel of the south door giving the extreme dates of the church, 1471-1518. The church is a granite structure, severely monumental. The west door is surmounted by a square tower which terminates in some very charming Renaissance work, rather less ornamented than the south tower. The southern façade and the belfry show distinctly the architect had in view a pretty solid fortification when he built it; but these defensive tendencies are in no way incongruous. The entire building has something of that effect.

The interior is agreeably subdued, and cool. The plaster saints look very comfortable and lenient, as they surely must be to these children of France. There are some curious carvings at the bases of the pillars, and the door of the organ stairway also has two curious carvings. There are two figures, a man and a woman, who gaze at one another like children trying to provoke a quarrel. Happily, perhaps, it can never get farther than provocation, though one wonders what was the artist's vision of their subsequent behaviour. I liked the fine silver cross, and the two wooden candlesticks on the high altar, and

I liked also the soft colouring of the stained glass windows. They are modern, but seem to be reacting well to Time.

The granite of this church was quarried at Tarrit, a little to the east of the village of Vertolaye, and is used in many of the buildings of Ambert, notably two large obelisks and a pleasing fountain in the Boulevard Michel-de-l'Hôpital, commonly called Les Allées. The usual way to reach this, from the church, is by turning first to the right and then to the left, passing a singular rotunda which serves as a corn market and town hall. Then come back again, and take any one of the short, tortuous lanes that burrow through the romantic mass of the old town.

Many an hour could be spent in this way. The old town is full of unexpected delights, continually cropping up in doorway, window, roof, and blackened façade. There are many fifteenth and sixteenth century houses of which the oldest, a wooden structure, dominates the Place des Minores and the Rue du Château. It was a very happy evening I spent, wandering through the old streets of Ambert. At every turn there were odd little vistas, mysterious ways, without any fear in them because of the chatting, friendly people on the doorsteps. And many a street was stately, rather than odd, solemn rather than mysterious, well-built and dignified rather than old and stumbling. From one point of view I saw them clustered protectingly about the old church, whose central tower rose like a fat minaret.

I stayed several days at Ambert, principally because it seemed a pleasant, restful little town, and because its inn entirely suited me. It seems to me that a good inn is worth a dozen good churches. That may be heresy, but it is also good travel logic.

I did a lot of walking in the neighbourhood, and some riding, and how I wished that I had been artist enough to sketch the things I saw—a group of peasants,

marvellously disposed in a field; a bridge, dark and mossy, an old house, odd and beautiful, rising from a meadow, a sunset, as if the glory of God were descended on this place, a village street, cobbled, thrusting aside two lines of amazing old houses that, in their age, had become congealed into two lines of picturesque wall.

Marsac was one of the places visited. I found that it possessed some pleasing pictures in its eleventh century church. The church itself lost much of its glory in the religious wars. Indeed, the whole town suffered then, and some one hundred and twenty houses were burned to the ground. There is also a Romanesque chapel with a fortified turret, and, best of all from the strictly picturesque point of view, an old ruined bridge over the river. Just beyond an extended hillock rises the pleasant old castle of Riol.

Oh! There is many a place hereabouts to set the artist's fingers tingling. St. Germain, with its ancient black virgin, and pretty St. Alyre. There was once a humble maiden, who lived in a village nearby. She was comely of face and figure, and did all she could to help her poor parents and to win the blessings of the heavenly saints. She wandered on one occasion into the woods of Germalonges, and a horrid man appeared. He sought to win favours from little Alyre, but she repulsed him so definitely that he lifted his axe and severed her pretty head from its body. Presently Alyre rose up, took her poor, blood-stained head in her hands and carried it to a fountain where she washed it clean. You may see the fountain to this very day.

The view, as you pass up from Ambert to Chaise-Dieu, increases sensibly in magnificence. The green and pleasant fields of Livradois have been left behind. The mountains close in, with their formidable array of fir-woods, pinnacles and gorges. Cuttings are threaded and tunnels pierced at frequent intervals, until presently the wild and

beautiful gorges of the Doré are reached, with their foaming waters and strange hues of brown, indigo and gold.

The train pants slowly upwards, by gorge and forest, by village and precipice, rising at last through a land of rocks and lonely woods to a plateau, sombre and charged with mystery, where stands the desolate monastery of Chaise-Dieu, huge, lonely and decayed, but famous even to this day, and proud even in its opulent decay. Such then is La Chaise-Dieu, the House of God, which in its day wielded its power through all France, and even to Spain and Italy. At this day it remains almost in the state that Pope Gregory left it, and is, after the Cathedral of Clermont, the most important Gothic building in Auvergne. I am rather fond of desolate places, because of their mystery and grandeur. Grandeur and mystery are here in full measure on this bleak, dark plateau, where the slovenly village of La Chaise-Dieu kneels in undiminished faith at the steps of the abbey, with the sombre woods whining in its ear and the unchecked winds giving eerie voice to the decrepitude of what was once the greatest abbey in the land. You expect to be repelled; but this scene is not repulsive. The wind, the woods, the wild spaciousness of the plateau, the beggarly hovels and the gaunt, lined, bloodless face of the House of God, have all an aspect of eternity; of something grim and colossal and catastrophic. Life, that was so intense here, has been withdrawn, and I doubt not that that has contributed to the strange aspect of La Chaise-Dieu.

According to a cartulary of Saint Genève, one of the dependents of the abbey, La Chaise-Dieu was founded by Robert, son of the Count of Aurillac, in the year 1046. Robert, with two of his father's henchmen, had been exiled from the parental domains, and came to this lonely plateau, where he built an oratory. The miracles of its

founder soon attracted a considerable following of disciples, and the oratory of the three hermits presently became an abbey called, by reason of the extreme holiness of its brethren, the Casa Dei, or House of God. Its popularity grew until a branch had soon to be opened for women. This was founded at Lavandieu, and one of its first members was the beautiful Judith, daughter of Robert II, Count of Auvergne. Judith was about to be married, but " on the night of her nuptials she left the house of her father and, pursued by her incensed parents, came to bury her youth and beauty at La Chaise-Dieu."

One day, twenty years after his arrival on the plateau, there came a voice from heaven which spoke to Robert ; and on that day he died, leaving a community of three hundred monks. His body was washed in wine and sewn up in a shroud formed from the hide of a stag. But even after he was buried he continued to perform miracles to such a ridiculous extent that the good fathers of the monastery grew very harassed. In their anxiety concerning the fervour of the monks, whose heads were being turned by the nature and quantity of the miracles, they prayed earnestly to Robert to cease the performance of miracles so that the divine offices might continue without further hindrance. It is not recorded how the industrious saint took this request to cease his posthumous activities, but I suppose it must have been rather trying for him to sit idle all day. I had thought that miracles were too few, and the fathers would surely have been better advised had they requested their saint to distribute his miracles over a wider field rather than to cease them altogether.

In addition to Robert, La Chaise-Dieu has had some very distinguished abbots. One of these, the Abbot Pierre Roger de Beaufort, afterwards became Pope Clement VI. He it was who commenced the present church in 1343, a task which was completed by his

nephew, who became Pope Gregory XI. Henri of Angoulême (illegitimate son of Henry II and a Scottish woman), who was Grand Prior of France, Governor of Provence, and a number of other things, was appointed abbot in 1562. Twenty-four years later he was killed by the lord of Castellane, husband of the beautiful Chasteauneuf. Then came Charles of Valois (illegitimate son of Charles IX), to be followed in 1629 by the great Richelieu, who united the abbey with Saint-Maur. Mazarin was yet another abbot, and later came the notorious Cardinal de Rohan, who was exiled thither after the affair of the diamond necklace. A celebrated company, in truth, who added rather to the secular power of the abbey than to the piety for which it had formerly been renowned.

In good time the abbey fell from its high estate and became little more than a ruin. I shall give a description of it as it appeared to a French writer of the last century. To him there seemed little but ruin. Entering the interior he got the impression of a vast granary, where only putrid miasmas were breathed, and where one walked on an accretion of filth. The hundred and fifty stalls of the choir, with their vaunted sculptures, were like an untidy lumber-room, or 'a parish auction room.' Withered tapestries and frescoes crumbled at the touch, and layers of indescribable dirt hid every feature of note from sight. "Here is nothing of the tragic grandeur, the nobility, the majesty of death, but rather the horror of a place which has long harboured disease; and the odours of haunts that are fever-stricken and pestiferous."

A very unattractive state of affairs. Our friend was probably a little pessimistic, though several other writers of the period saw nothing save a sad desolation. As indeed one sees to-day; only not so sombrely. There is no longer any need to hold one's nose, and what there is of beauty one may examine with perfect equanimity and not a little enthusiasm. You may disturb a bat, or an

owl: so much the better. These stage properties of every medieval ruin play a considerable part in creating that atmosphere so desirable to the romantic visitor. I can dispense with ivy, but not with the bat and the owl, the owl which hoots when the soft glow of night has placed its bloom upon the ancient stones, and the bat that frightens the silence of dim halls.

As a matter of fact, the church of St. Robert is almost in the same condition as it was left by Pope Gregory XI. I am uncertain whether or not I appreciate its fortress-like severities, its entire absence of monumental sculpture, and its squat proportions. Nevertheless, it impresses me by its resolute strength. The appearance of flattened proportions is due to the fact that its architect chose the southern Gothic style, which permits of no windows or other interruptions; also from this southern Gothic influence comes the paucity of sculpture; but the final cause of its unmitigated severity is undoubtedly the hardness and coarseness of the materials, in which granite and, to a lesser extent, sandstone predominate. The great mass of it, and the exceedingly careful construction has, however, produced a building that cannot fail to be imposing. And that is entirely suitable to its bleak situation, on an altitude higher than that of any other monumental building in France.

The west façade is reached by a stairway of some forty steps and is entered by a door which, before the ravages of the Huguenots, was decorated with statues. Like all the rest of the exterior, this façade is grimly severe. The two towers are said, by local tradition, to have supported spires. If so, these spires had already disappeared in 1675, because an engraved plan of that year represents the belfries in their present state. The stone of this façade has become pleasantly masked by time and weather, two artists which have served in some measure to fill the need for decoration, and have done their work well.

A steeply-pitched slate roof covers the church and is a poor substitute, I imagine, for its red-tiled predecessor.

Just inside the doorway, which has St. Robert sculptured on its central pier, is a big organ loft, which, however, will not excite you. The nave is bare, with a rood-screen interrupting the perspective so that it seems to be disproportionately wide and low ; and in the aisles are one or two interesting tombs, including that of Edith, the Queen of Edward the Confessor. Clement's tomb, a fine structure of black and white marble, denuded of its decorations but still impressive, is in the Choir, which is further distinguished by the three fifteenth century tempera paintings of the Dance of Death. They have a curiously strong effect, these paintings, though hardly any detail can be picked out. The stalls, no longer in the state of dilapidation described by our French author, show very fine workmanship ; above them are fourteen pieces of Flemish tapestry illustrating, very agreeably, scenes from the New Testament, and those from the Old Testament which predicted them.

It is desolate : one cannot deny it. You think of Edward's queen, of Clement himself, of Mazarin and Richelieu ; you mingle the intrigues of great States, of great men and beautiful women ; you think of evil, sadness, loveliness—as you think of these things when a great piece of music is played—you hear the drone of priestly voices, the shuffle of feet, the muttering of beads; you watch pale shafts of light delving noiselessly into the shadows ; and if alone you would pray, but you have not the heart to. It is silent, dim. If a world there is outside, it is forgotten here. I wonder if, when five hundred or a thousand years have passed, the ruins of twentieth century works will evoke these sensations. I think not. We live too trivially. And when not too trivially, too much in the mass. To posterity we shall be something abstract : neither pity nor envy lies in

store for us. Nothing we do or think will stir the souls of the unborn.

Joined diagonally to this church is the *Tour Clémentine*, the old monastic keep, constructed not by Clement VI, whose name it bears, but by the Abbot of Chanac. It is a firm, rectangular structure, with a low roof, and from its summit there is a fine view of the cold, unfriendly neighbourhood. The cloisters are mostly ruin ; and the prettiest thing they have is a little door in an extant wall, with the arms of Jaques de Sénectaire upon it. There are two galleries, pleasant enough, with bays looking down on to green, cool grass.

But, as I have said, all is desolate—the church, the cloisters, presbytery, schools, hospice, and kitchens. Life is what they need. Merry monks, intriguing monks, wicked monks. It matters not, so long as it be life. Well, imagine it is there : people the old abbey with ghosts, grey forms shuffling uneasily amid relics of splendour ; for outside is the sun and the bustle of cicadas, the barking of dogs, and the laughter of dirty urchins. Bright and glowing is the life outside ; and down below, in the valleys, are pastures and meadows and virginal drifts of flowers. The world lies outside, a step away. And, for the moment, people these dim halls with ghosts.

Out in the village are several interesting old houses. Their construction gives them the appearance of miniature fortresses. They are elevated on a high base, and rise under a flat roof to which one ascends by means of ladders. I entered one of these houses, which was an inn, by chance, and saw there some images in a case. They were images for pious devotion. By the side of these were others of an obscene character ; and like this was the conversation of the peasants gathered there—a discourse coloured by sacred and profane oaths. A strange people. Hospitable without being servile, pos-

sessors of honest, rugged spirits, pious and blasphemous, influenced by the beauties and asperities of their land and of the sky above them.

As I turned my back upon La Chaise-Dieu the dusk fell, and gathered up all the village, which passed away as a dream passes. But its influence, strange and desirable, lay upon me far into the night. The descent from the plateau was slow and insensible. I saw not Ceaun d'Allègre because it lay in darkness ; nor St. Georges-d'Aurac, but at Darsac I halted to rest the night at the Hôtel Galland. When the morning came there again was the sun and the laughing trees, and a cool, shiny river, the Borne. Some distance away, near to Allègre, rose the extinct volcano of Mont du Bar, which Georges Sand visited and found so beautiful. The storms which descended upon this countryside used to be attributed to the influence of the lake which formerly lay in this perfectly-rounded cone. The peasants became so incensed at its wicked behaviour that—so their story goes —they carried thither vast quantities of quicksilver and dried it up.

The train rambles noisily, cheerfully, along the Borne valley, through scenes of fulsome fertility, until presently it halts at the imposing castle of St. Vidal. Thereafter come tunnels, and one sees the cool, calm Borne lose all its sedateness and go tumbling like a madcap through a fine, beetling gorge. Here are the ruins of a château, and presently a gay little valley opens out, with the château de Ceyssac on a firm rock. Away in the distance, rises a curious rock pinnacle, with what appeared to be tiers of dwellings up its slope, and on the summit a dark, thin church. Thus is Le Puy revealed. The country grows more singular as the town approaches, dark hills rise up, tall pinnacles, and many dwellings. There is noise and bustle ; the sound of clattering trams and the passage of many feet. It is Le Puy.

V

LE BUISSON TO SOUILLAC

THE little way from Le Buisson to Souillac I was accompanied by a young and talkative commercial traveller, who was fleeing from the wrath of a citizen of Le Buisson. I feel that I must begin by telling his story. It so affected me that I would have you all weep a tear in delicate sympathy ; and that might as well be now as later on in my narrative. A mercurial little fellow. The potted meats of his firm were paradise enow. Thought of them made him glow visibly ; talk of them made him flutter all over like a wind-whipped lake. The wind would drop in an instant ; perspiration would exude from his brow ; he would look at me with tears in his eye. Ah ! Monsieur, ah ! Malheur ! Malheur !

I knew what that meant ; and I shall tell you. While at Beynac he met a lady, a German lady who knew but little French. She wished to write to a friend of hers at Buisson, a French lady, but was a poor hand at writing French, and called in the aid of the gentleman who travelled in potted meats. What a fine letter he wrote, how full of sweet endearments. Tiens ! It took him three hours to compose the German lady's very affectionate effusion to her friend, Madame X, of Buisson.

Ach ! Les Femmes, les femmes ! Be they French or German or Hottentot, a pretty kettle of fish they are, to be sure. The Lord forgive us ! How can one endure them ? The German lady went on a visit to her friend Madame X, and there, inadvertently, she left behind the

draft letter written by the vendor of potted meats. Not that that should cause uneasiness. But wait! Monsieur X, returning that night to his home, discovered the miserable draft. Aha! he cried (I doubt not); for it happened that he was well acquainted with my companion and knew his handwriting. The very devil! Name of a name! A thousand thunders! What did that potted meat donkey mean by writing such an endearing letter to his wife, the once virtuous Madame X.

Explanations were futile. The trade in potted meats at Le Buisson was suddenly checked. My companion's most recent memory was of one hand on the seat of his trousers and another on the scruff of his neck. Ah! Malheur, Malheur! Never again would his soul be melted by a damsel in distress. Madame X, indeed! Ha! With a nose like a snout and a skin the colour of a wet window. Malheur! Malheur! He peered cautiously out of the window before alighting, and with his bag of potted meats he marched, a sore and disillusioned soul, up the undistinguished streets of Siorac.

For all that the sun was warm and the valley green. Water flowed at our feet, and pretty glades opened here and there. It was hay time, and the smell and sound of the sweetest of all labours was upon the earth. There came a plateau, with vineyards as far as the eye could see, and on the edge of it stood St. Cyprien, looking out to the plain, and down to two affluents of the Dordogne. It lies at the foot of its old church, with the monastery it once served now transformed into a school, but beyond that there is little to detain a traveller. About a mile and a half to the south-west of this village, reached by a very pleasant road, is the restored castle of Laroque-Gageac, the birthplace of the chronicler Jean Tarde.

Jean was born in 1562, member of well-respected family. He was intended for the church, a career then

held in higher credit than in these days. In 1591 he became a doctor of civil and canon law, and then set off on travels in the South of France. He visited Béziers and Marseille in 1591, and in the subsequent three years he resided at different periods in Nîmes, Avignon and Uzès. In these parts of France, so rich in classical lore and remnants of the Roman occupation, he imbibed a lofty scholarship, diligently devoting his time to the study of archæology, numismatics and history. At the time, also, he began his first literary works.

He went to Rome, where he remained for four months and acquired the friendship of Clavius, surnamed the Euclid of the sixteenth century, and one of the chief reformers of the Julian calendar. Jean Tarde returned from his travels with a passionate love for the exact sciences, for history and for archæology, and with the determination to commence his chronicles. In 1613 he went again to Rome, and, resting at Florence on the way, there met Galileo, to whom he carried a letter of introduction from Robert de Balfour, a scholar of Bordeaux. Galileo, who was a sick man, received the Sarlat canon with gladness, and told him the secrets of his new telescope, promising to send him certain lenses. Tarde himself constructed a telescope, and was the first to think of using a blackened glass to preserve the eyes of the observer. The latter part of his life was divided between the duties of a vicar-general and the study of the constellations, with, however, a goodly portion of his time devoted to the chronicles. These works, so precise, clear, simple and naïve, stand among the finest literary productions of his age, and it is as a chronicler that Jean Tarde's name will endure. Some of his records we shall find useful and apposite as our story proceeds.

The little train continues to Castelnaud-Fayrac, which has a sixteenth century Manor House reflected in the waters of the Dordogne, and furnished in the style of its

period. The old castle of Castelnaud, with a keep raised by the English during their occupation of this region, is about two miles to the south-east. Opposite Castelnaud, near the mouth of the Céon, obstructed by tree-trunks and branches, and shaded by poplars and alder trees, rise the springs of the Bullide, which bubble up from fine sand and precipitate a clear, constant stream into the Dordogne. It is reckoned that as much as several hundred litres of water pass each second from these springs.

Castelnaud played a considerable part in the struggles between the French and the English invaders, who had overrun most of the countryside, and it was under English occupation long enough for the powerful keep to be constructed. At this time the lord of Limeuil was one of the most powerful men in the land, and, after abandoning the French cause, he again took arms against the English in 1412. He was captured by the English and placed as a prisoner in the castle of Castelnaud, with the promise that he would be retrieved if one of his castles were handed over to his enemies. These conditions he flatly refused, and charged one of his friends, Guibert de Lasiès, to inform the commanders of his garrisons that they must on no account surrender, not even if he, their lord, were led up in front of the walls and beheaded before their eyes.

The English succeeded in intercepting this brave message, and arrested Guibert; but not before he had been able to convey the instructions secretly to a citizen of Sarlat, who thereupon informed the consuls of the city. The message to the garrisons was then entrusted to two monks, who visited all the fortresses belonging to the lord of Limeuil and passed on the valiant cry of 'No Surrender.' In this way all the garrisons were emboldened to stand fast, and the efforts of the English were in vain. Castelnaud and Limeuil were both restored

to France in 1433, and my lord of Limeuil was given back to his people.

So we come to Beynac. Whichever way you come to Beynac it is very beautiful. There is a slow, entrancing descent between steep, wooded hills. Then the line frees itself, and runs into a clear, green space, with the river bending through; and beyond the fields you see, unbelievably, the château-crowned cliff of Beynac. You see another castle facing it, set firmly in a thick green wood on the opposite bank of the river; and a third is on your left, also with the river between; and if you look back you see the jagged outline of Castelnaud upon its far-seeing hill. All these castles look upon a scene of rich fertility, a beauteous scene of woods and meadows, cultivated fields and green, flowing river; and behind them is a hinterland so sparse and ungenerous that it is little wonder there were many struggles for this cool garden enclosed.

Oh! It is a pleasant land, this of Périgord, a secluded, pleasant land. I daresay not one in a hundred travellers has ever been in Upper Périgord, or, for that matter, heard of it. Yet for one who likes to potter about among rivers and strange geological formations, in the ways of troubadours and gallant knights, there can be few more agreeable regions. In springtime, parts of upper Périgord are very beautiful; beautiful with a quiet, Arcadian gentleness of soft young grass and flowers, with streams running through them, and distant glimpses of snow-steepled hills disposed strangely on the horizon.

There is something curious about it all. It belongs to a different France from that we are familiar with; and the people, too, are different. If you want the sense of medieval things you can get it in Périgord as well as anywhere. The people are medieval, and so are the towns and the villages. They are quiet towns and villages, most of them. Nothing much seems ever to disturb

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their uneventful day. A few geese quacking up the street, self-conscious and clumsy; urchins wheeling hoops; a travelling theatre drawn up in the square—there is nothing as a rule more exciting than this, except on fête days.

So much the better for some of us who travel. The quiet composes our minds and gives us a greater appreciation of little things. For there are little things galore in these towns of Upper Périgord; and we like them better because everything is slow, and, if you will, asleep. It gives an excuse to lie in the sun, to sit with a cool *bock* at a café table underneath an old tree, dreaming; to go following the river through flowery meadows to some little, out-of-way village, which is like an old woodcut.

That is how you come to Laroque-Gageac, not far from Beynac, a place where folks go to bathe in the river. A village with a name like that should be oddly picturesque; and so it is. It lies at the foot of queer rocks; and many of its houses have climbed up the rocks, which seems a risky thing to do. Its little gable-roofed shrine, with Gothic cross atop, is in the square, and so the square somehow takes on an air of dignity. Beynac, too, hangs low beneath a very high rock, though some of it aspires to the feudal fortress on top. Not much of the fortress is left, except the keep, but that is splendid. With the glow of the evening sun upon its resolute stones it seems to grow taller and wider and even more resolute; and the village below grows less and less substantial because it lies in the darkness.

The pleasantest thing at Beynac is its inn. Then I remember the light of the setting sun on the fields, the river and the hills, with a ferryman beaching his little boat, and a few oxen coming in from their labours, and a little goose-girl, a sweet little goose-girl, conducting her charges up the village street. Geese have never forgotten that they once saved the capitol. Finally there

comes the splendid old château, a magnificent thirteenth century building, well restored, and looking over a marvellous view, with the river streaming through it as far as eye can see.

This Dordogne is one of the most beautiful rivers in France. I have seen it cleaving through the wild, deep gorges between Roquebron and Gaignac, amid scenery which, if in some other parts of France, would be justly eulogised in guide-books that now wholly ignore it. It washes the old citadel of Castelnau de Bretonnoux, and then goes softly, idly, through a green plain, between dark walls of poplar trees; it mirrors the grim rock castle of Gluges and then sweeps down through a valley I should like to spend a month in; darkly it looks up at the rock of Fénelon, and swiftly passes from the giant stone of Codon, that hangs above it, 600 feet, an everlasting threat to the peace of Périgord; for it is said that when this rock tumbles from its base, then evil will befall, a great and unexpected evil.

All that, however, is a little in advance.

It is a mere three or four miles from Beynac to Sarlat. I walked it, watching the haymakers at their task as I climbed pleasantly upwards, through the sunlight. A little school-house was passed; presently a few brown-skinned, bare-footed girls padded by, averting their eyes; and a man, a woman and a donkey came down, sending up, from hoofs and sabots, a cloud of white dust. In clearings of the forest there were strips of maize, and presently a boy passed with a hand-cart filled with the earth from which Sarlat makes its well known pottery. Then the forest and the fields vanished to make way for the old, rugged city of Sarlat.

As I wandered down that long street of Sarlat, that interminably long street of Sarlat, I said to myself: Find me a café-table beneath an overhanging tree; place me a *bock* upon that table, and tell me at what hour the train

leaves for Beynac, whither I would fain return ; for this may have been worth much fighting, much gnashing of teeth, to the Black Prince, but to me it is a long, an interminably long, dusty street, with no solace for such as I (*Sauf votre respect, Monsieur Tarde !*).

That is how travellers make foolish mistakes. Here at Sarlat there appears to be little else besides that long main street, with mediocre houses and shops on each side of it. But if you ask a few polite questions you will be directed a little off that main street into the old, the beautiful town, ruinous and dark and whimsical. Here, indeed, are corners for the artist who would crowd his canvas with a medley of old incongruous dwellings like those which hem in and almost stifle the tottering church. In the shadow of tall, Gothic vaulting are the huddled, wooden forms of shops and shanties ; from within the holy precincts comes the husky cry of pedlars ; and the ribs of the great arches are blackened by the smoke of bakers' ovens.

I love that old church, which formerly was a fine cathedral. It was built in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when people had both taste and time for beauty. The church was then part of an abbey founded in the eighth century under the name of Saint Sacerdos, or Serdot ; and a bishop's palace was built in 1317. The Abbey was suppressed in 1790, and except for the church, a little seminary, and a pretty garden distinguished by a curious mortuary chapel, the monastic buildings have wholly disappeared.

On the west portal of the church are five statues, sadly mutilated during the Wars of Religion, to which unhappy cause must be attributed the entire downfall of this once-beautiful building. It is possible, however, to make out a soldier carrying his severed head, and, near to this, a woman spinning her distaff. That is a pleasing, homely note ; for in one's first hours along the roads of

Périgord one meets these industrious old ladies, at their distaff—guarding a tethered goat, marching on behind a flock of geese, coming in or going out between the fields and the village, always they spin the distaff tirelessly, unthinkingly. The church within is dark and untidy, but for all that it seems a friendly, godly place. Its decorations are few and of little account except for some pleasantly vivacious carvings of fifteenth century Sarlat notabilities to be seen in a chapel on the left of the choir.

There is a curious little building in the convent garden at the back of the church. It is really a mortuary chapel of cylindrical shape, and something like the famous octagon of Montmorillon, with strange, Gothic mouldings, and an imbricated spire. These old vaults are probably the most ancient buildings in Sarlat, and were used for the burial of prebendaries and certain other members of the chapter. A long, black mortuary band is painted on the exterior wall of the cathedral, opposite these tombs ; and this used to be decorated with the escutcheons—now mostly obliterated—of those who were buried here.

The days of the old abbey are gone, though time was when the whole town was governed by it, and its lord abbot was supreme judge, with full judicial, political and religious powers. But with the growth of Royal authority—a system which in France went side by side with the growth of patriotism, itself a direct outcome of the conditions immediately before and after the triumphs of Joan of Arc—the power of the abbot waned, like that of purely civil seigneurs ; until finally the king had removed practically all the abbot's prerogatives.

It may not be an instance of cause and effect, but it is none the less true that, with the dwindling of the abbot's powers, so came the dwindling of Sarlat's prosperity. For centuries it had been an important administrative and religious centre with a large trade which it was able to hold and increase because of the security it enjoyed

when most of the surrounding country, bristling with castles and contentious lords, was rendered desolate by warfare. The fairs of Sarlat were renowned beyond the borders of Périgord, and through all the land of Aquitaine ; and its commerce solidly enriched the inhabitants. There were generations of prosperous merchants, little princes in their own way, who formed the Sarladais bourgeoisie, and built those noble houses which one so much admires to-day.

These houses, with spacious rooms tastefully adorned, are met with all through the old town, and give the impression that another five hundred years of usefulness is not too much to ask of them. They give the city a special character of the Middle Ages, fine and durable ; and have, one imagines, a fairly evident influence upon the people. For the present inhabitants retain the customs and temperament of their medieval ancestors, with only such outward modifications as the pressure of advancing civilization demands.

The Sarladais of the Middle Ages were extremely superstitious for a people given so much to prospering activities of trade. They believed in ghosts, jack-o'-lanterns and bugbears. They feared the devil and gave the utmost respect to sorcerers, and the imagination gave birth to stories impressed with horrible terrors, and which old women repeat even to this day. In spite of the abbey, the basis of their religious sentiments was the fear of supernatural agencies rather than respect for Divinity. Cemeteries were used as meeting-places and churches as grain markets, and their whole conduct was ludicrously unorthodox.

Even to-day there is a market established in a church, an old fourteenth century building in the heart of the old town. In the semi-darkness of the interior, impressed with the aspect of things religious, as though the long vanished sounds of the organ still hung palely, like

smoke, among the rafters, men and women go about their business like figures on a stage. The call of their trade echoes strangely among the vaults and pillars of the church, and the odd diversity of their wares, among the shadows, is something beautiful and strange, and oriental. For things like this I love France.

Close to this church is a splendid fourteenth century house, the façade pricked out on the first floor with charming little windows, with decorated curves. It must be very pleasant to lean out of windows like that. There is another fine old house, called l'Hôtel de Brons, near the cathedral. It is really a palace, built at the time of Henry II, and flanked by a high tower. But one of the most remarkable of these old mansions is that where lived Etienne de la Boëtie, Montaigne's philosophical friend. It is a delightful example of the French Renaissance, and is richly ornamented with carvings. It bears an inscription commemorative of Boëtie.

Standing in the animated old Place du Palais, and again in the Place de Lendreire, you recall a great deal of the picturesque ebb and flow of centuries through this little town ; but by the courtesy of a chance friend, who showed me certain old records, I was able to recall, also, some of the barbarity of those centuries. In the matter of punishment for civil crimes, Sarlat showed nothing if not enterprise. A man convicted of robbery was beaten with rods in the cross-ways and again in the Place du Palais and the Place de Lendreire. In the Place de Lendreire he was branded with a hot iron and marked with the letter V, for Vol, robbery. He was also fined ten pounds and banished for life.

Poor Marie Dalbavie, who stole a piece of muslin on the day of the fair of St. Martin, was flogged naked, in the square, and branded with the letter V, and then fined three pounds and banished. The plea of kleptomania was unknown in those days. Another thief was con-

demned to be hung up and strangled, bearing a placard on which were written the words 'Domestic Thief'. His body was then exposed on the high road. Finally, he was charged to deliver up to the court the sum of five pounds, but that, I suppose, was the least of his troubles! Hanging up and strangling was a frequent sight in the Place du Palais, and if the crime were bad enough the body was afterwards exposed just outside the town, and left there 'until entirely consumed.'

Pierre Dalmas, convicted of stealing sacred vases from the church at Cussac, and of having stuck, fractured and broken them, finally handing them over to a Jewish merchant of the town of Bergerac, was condemned to make amends naked, with a rope about his neck, holding in his hands a torch of burning wax weighing two pounds. From the principal door of the cathedral he was led by an executioner into a dung-cart used for emptying the filth of the town; and he wore a placard in front and behind, marked 'Sacrilege.'

The wrist of his right hand was then cut off and placed in front of the church, after which he was carried in the dung-cart to the Place de Lendreire, there to be tied up in an iron chair and burned alive, his ashes being thrown to the wind. A woman who received the stolen goods was sentenced to be hung up and strangled; but I fear she succeeded in eluding the sentence, for the prison records sentence her only 'by default.' These are mild sentences compared to some, and the degree of torture which this Place du Palais has witnessed, as recently as the eighteenth century, makes me thankful to be alive in days which, if less obviously romantic, are certainly more humane.

Sarlat had its full share of trouble, what with the English, the Calvinists, the peasant insurrectionists, and those acts of God which have been pitifully frequent in the annals of these medieval towns. The English, not con-

tent with what shall be termed legitimate warfare (during struggles in which the Sarladais were frequently the victors), left behind them armed bands of freebooters—mostly desperate cut-throats, of whom only a small percentage were of English blood—to harass the countryside for many years after the French had gained control.

The Sarladais could cope with these interruptions to their normal life; but such things as plague unnerved them, and once caused the abandonment of their city. Towards the end of August, 1521, an army of German foot soldiers, marching to Fontarabie, halted a space at Sarlat and when they left they left the plague behind them. Three thousand people—half the population—perished, and the terrified remnants fled from their shops and their homes, leaving the city desolate throughout the whole of the year 1522.

Calamity succeeded calamity, and on 31st May in the year 1523—less than twelve months after the return of the citizens—an enormous water-spout burst over the country. In the suburb of Endreire the water rose to a height of ten feet in the Convent of the Cordeliers, and, forcing its way through the gate of Endreire, poured in torrents through the city, where it was disastrously dammed up by the southern fortifications. In this way the volume of water grew until presently it had submerged half the dwellings. It was released by the demolition of part of the town wall, but the damage, which included heavy loss of life, both among human beings and animals, was irreparable.

My journey on to Souillac was in the nature of a leap in the dark. I knew nothing about it except certain historical details, and my friends at Sarlat were hardly confident about the accommodation I should find there But I held to my purpose. Fénelon I wished to see, and Domme especially; and between these two, if you travel

by train, lies Souillac. I halted at Carsac, to observe the eleventh century church, and from there a short journey brought me to Calviac, opposite which is the Château de Fénelon, all bunched up, and very medieval-looking, though erected when the need for feudal castles had ended. It is a romantic mass of stone with round towers supporting pointed roofs, and Gothic gables projecting lightly over dormer windows. Round about lay a dense grove of trees, and over all hung the sun, a warm, white light revealing all the world.

François de Salignac de la Mothe, called Fénelon, was born in a room of this castle on the 6th August, 1651. He passed his childhood there, and at Sarlat, in the company of his uncle, François, a bishop. Ecclesiastical honours, the adulation of courts, and the gracious rewards which come to a distinguished man of letters, never caused Fénelon to forget Sarlat, or the people with whom he passed his youth ; and throughout the whole of his life he maintained the warmest relations with his Périgord associates. His death was the signal for mourning throughout the entire countryside.

This sombre little wood held jays' nests then as now, and doubtless one's clothes were torn among the thick brambles with equal facility and accompanied by similar fretful outbursts. But I wonder if the castle was then so still and quiet as now. There was scarcely a sound as I passed through the outer and then the inner gateway of this erect and unbroken mass. The walls, of exceptional strength, are brown and mossy ; and the whole place has an atmosphere of patient expectancy, as though it waited for some opportunity to justify its resolute features.

In Fénelon's room is his bedstead, with slender, twisted columns for posts, and old silk hangings, faded and worn. It is a little musty and ghostly ; somehow the personality of the great churchman, if it hangs at all

in this room, hangs heavily. A doorway leads from the bedroom to a great *salle à manger*, with wide, vast hearth, and seats in the ingle-corner covered by an elliptical hearth; and with massive oak furniture of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. It is a room such as Fénelon looked upon, and doubtless these are chairs he sat upon.

From the summit of one of the machicolated towers there is a beautiful view over black Périgord; an enormous, solemn expanse of well-wooded country, riven by deep gorges and undulating in a green succession of hills. In the midst of it the Dordogne valley runs, with the river sparkling by cliff and meadow, town and village,—a bright, cheerful interlude in those dark forests where wolves are still hunted.

Let me add that the Dordogne, whilst not itself a good river for fishing, has a number of tributaries, like the Céon. In these streams there are plenty of carp, which, however, call forth unusual skill with the line and even with the net except at flood time, when a lucky throw will as often as not give you two or three fine carp. Dace, Barbel, gudgeon, perch, bream and chub are the fish commonly landed here, and trout are plentiful. It is a belief of the people in these parts that fish should be cooked alive; but that is a mere stupid legacy from an age when all hearts were hardened against cruelty.

After Fénelon the way lies to Carlux. This is followed by Cazoulès and then comes Souillac. There is a reasonable inn at Cazoulès. That is the only inducement to remain there; and as there is a better one at Souillac even that inducement is small. Souillac is a little place, with a fine old twelfth century church, and a remarkable grandmother who spends her time making bead crosses for her grandchildren. She seems as much a relic of antiquity as the old church is, and is garrulously proud of the way in which she outlives that numerous grand-

children. She sits in the sun, with geese quacking about her, and a little wheel between her knees. The wheel goes ceaselessly, whirring little bright beads, hobgoblins of beads, out to a thin wire, *et voilà*, there is the cross, all gold and glittering, for the frail descendants of the deathless lady.

The extraordinary thing about Souillac's church is its relief of the Last Judgment. You would expect to find this in the tympanum of the portal, but instead you must seek it inside over a Gothic arch at the west end. A vigorous, uncouth piece of work, strangely powerful. The arch is supported by two pillars carved to represent two figures on the swift career to hell. I was fascinated by the look of utter horror on both their faces, especially that of the woman, who clasps the man by the waist. The meaning is terribly clear :

> "The woman's cause is man's ! they rise or sink
> Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free."

The artist has succeeded in writing a grim despair upon the faces of all those to whom he has allotted hell ; but one wonders why the pig is included.

A day passed pleasantly enough at Souillac, and then in the warm noon, I set off in the company of a young fisherman, down the valley of the Dordogne to the lonely bastide of Domme. There came forest, and then cultivated slopes. A peasant or two went by, and once a cyclist. Then, at last, I saw the fine ramparts of Domme, upon the summit of a bare, lofty hill, a rocky impregnable place, that it was no easy matter to climb in the afternoon sun. Presently there came a fortified gateway, flanked by ruined drum towers, and connected by a curtain with the ramparts.

Situated perpendicularly upon its high hill, this great bastide dominates the left bank of the Dordogne. At its base lies the ancient town, which was besieged and

destroyed by Simon de Montfort in 1215. The bastide was raised for the king of France and was made to serve as a frontier-protection against the English established in Agenais and Quercy, a task it only partially fulfilled. The town itself was built in 1283, and was granted by King Philip the Bold all the privileges of municipal organization perpetually allied to the crown.

The inhabitants had the right of self-government, and were entitled to elect their own consuls. They were also given the privilege of a free mill and a free oven, a detail which was, in fact, of very great benefit to the people. For up to that time the seigneurs compelled their vassals to grind and bake at the seigneurial mills and bakehouses and to pay their lords a heavy fee for the privilege. As still further concession, Domme was freed from all dues except the payment of six deniers to the king from every house.

In each of the towers at the entrance there is a large guard-room, interesting now because of the devices carved upon its walls by those who were stationed there. A good deal of the wall is sheer rock, and the whole place, though largely ruinous, gives an aspect of strength and resolute purpose. Doubtless it would have held out against the English for a much longer period had it not been for what Tarde calls the woeful behaviour of "quelques traistes". For it appears that on 13th September, 1417, Bertrand d'Aszac, Governor of Domme, treacherously delivered the town and its castles to the English, a betrayal which had grave consequences; for it was followed by the enemy's occupation of the entire countryside.

VI

THE VALLEY OF THE DRÔME

The train rattled out from Livron at the rate of about ten miles an hour. Thus unhurriedly we moved through vineyards, where the peasants were busy at their tasks, and sauntered by little towns with white châteaux, and low cosy homesteads. The air was warm, and odorous with grapes, and there were pretty groups of pine trees and poplars. Out of this we lurched into a region of straggling houses that got thicker and thicker and then, in a flash, became the populous city of Crest.

The river is at its base, and at its head a great rock; and there is more liveliness in its streets than in half the provincial capitals of France put together. In half an hour I found that to be its principal charm; but then, half an hour is little enough time; barely enough to sit in a café chatting with a stranger who, try as he may, cannot persuade you to ascend the rock-cut stairway that leads to the ancient keep. If the coffee is at all hot, your half an hour is up in no time, and keeps are out of the question.

In the eleventh century the Counts of Valentinois constructed this enormous fortress. Later they added a formidable castle which Simon de Montfort besieged in vain on two occasions. During the sixteenth century it was a principal citadel of the Catholics who gathered there to resist the Calvinists. In 1627 Richelieu destroyed the castle. He could not destroy the keep; and since then it has been a state prison. I suppose it might just as well be a prison as simply a relic.

But Crest is not a town to halt at for any length of time. I called there simply because it was the best place from which to visit the forest of Saou, which lies about ten miles to the south-east, a huge, wooded basin enclosed by a ring of limestone peaks. You may hire a car for a matter of about forty francs, or you may go by omnibus for very much less, or you may walk. If you are wise you will go by omnibus, because your fellow passengers are certain to be interesting.

Soon after leaving Crest, whose black keep was visible for several miles, we crossed the river Drôme, a broad, swollen stream, with pleasant banks for much of the way, and some fine, wooded side-valleys. It seemed very beautiful to me, as we ascended to the Plateau of Planuce, but my companions took no notice. 'Que c'est belle, la campagne,' I said to my neighbour. He looked about to see if he could confirm my remark, and then, as if he had never before noticed it, he replied ,' Oui, Monsieur, c'est belle.'

There were several respectable hills. It was strange how slopes, arid and grey, descended into little valleys green and fragrant. In one of these valleys lies the hamlet of Lambres. You see it ahead of you for some time, a group of brown houses, with a church tower crowning it. It looked almost like a cairn of brown stones, with a post rising up from the centre. The dogs of Lambres barked loudly, and old women and children rushed out to see us ; for some of us were old friends passing through, who had news to tell.

I began to wish that I could have made this journey on foot. The wish increased with our journey, because I saw many places that would have profited me for an hour's idle investigation. And the mere act of walking, in a land like this, is a great happiness. To march along a straggling road, expectant always ; to see in the distance the tall steeple of some old hospitable town ; to be

guided thither, if night has fallen, by the bark of a dog or the neigh of a horse—these things in themselves are all the justification one needs for such unobtrusive travelling.

The route climbs a long incline, and then, if you look back, you see the clustered town of Crest, and all its bustling neighbourhood. If you look forward there is Auriples, by the ruins of the Château of Antichamp. Here it is rather mournful, because of ruin and a blankness of expression on the earth, which here seems like a strange hiatus, a curious break in the green fertility of Drôme. But the sun above is so bright, and the chatter in the omnibus so cheerful, that my spirits are maintained. And in a moment we have alighted, with much fuss and stretching of limbs, at Saou.

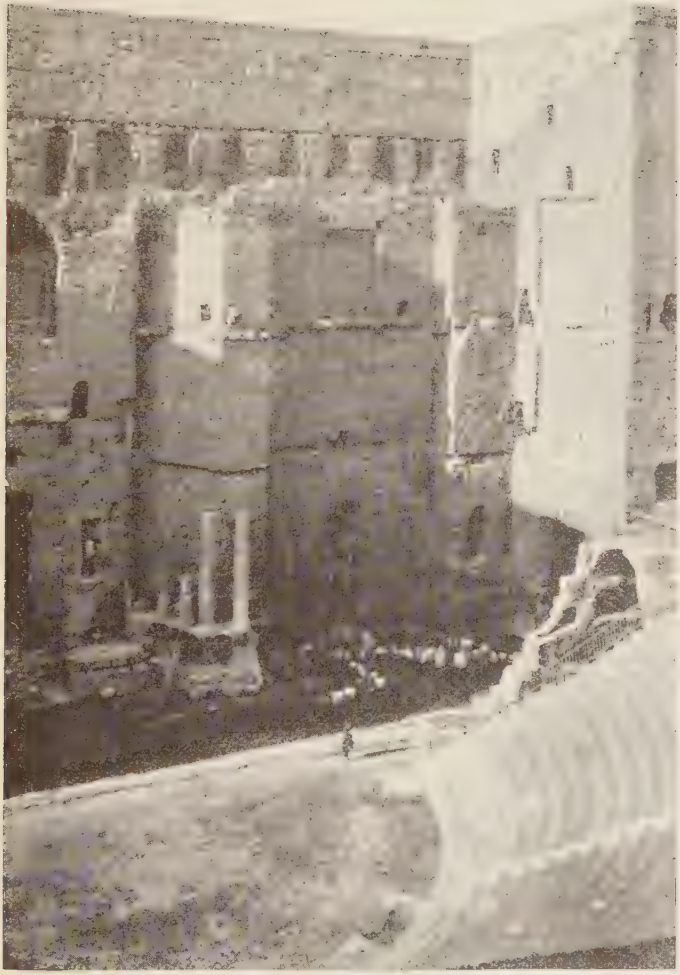
I had all an afternoon to wander in the Forest of Saou. Here are great woods, thick and green, filled with the song of birds and the perfume of a rank undergrowth. Now and then the wood divides, permitting a precious acre of white-starred meadow, or an opening where the undergrowth has clambered among the ancient ruins of castle, abbey or hamlet. At Saou itself, which lies on the bank of the river Vèbre, there is little enough to see beyond the ruins of its old abbey, established at the end of the fifth century. Perhaps because it is so utterly ruinous, this abbey has a remarkably picturesque appearance, exemplified by its machicolated gate and two square towers.

The natural rock gateway by which the waters of the Vèbre emerge from their forest basin is known as the Pertuis de la Forêt. Somewhat to the west of this curious formation is the Donjon of Lastic, a polygonal tower, comely and romantic, which has stood its ground since the fourteenth century. I did my wanderings through the forest on the back of an excellent little pony, which the gracious patron of the Hôtel du Nord found for me,

and even if there had been no antiquities I would have enjoyed that afternoon to the utmost. For this is a sort of enchanted forest, beautifully quiet and green and odorous ; and the Vèbre, which is hardly big enough to be called a river, is a pretty, babbling stream fully suited to the nature of its environment. Some of the slighter knolls in the forest we climbed, so that the trees lay below us, and a vast country stretched slopingly away till it seemed that our little knoll was the top of the world.

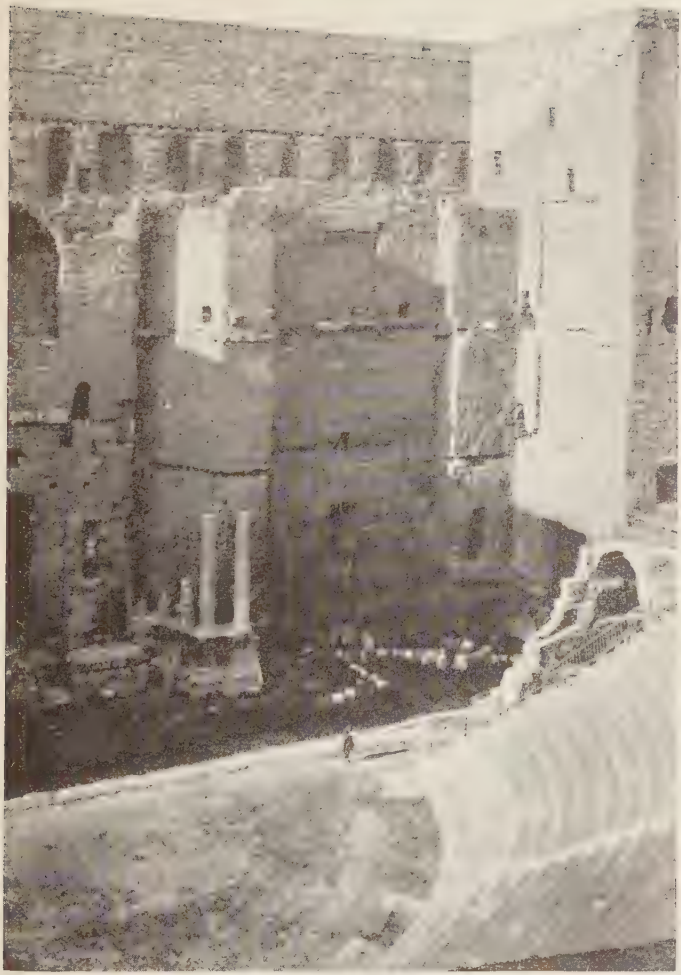
I returned to Crest next morning, resolved to push along at once to Die. Unhappily it was raining. Even more unhappily, I missed the first train, whereat I found an adjacent café, and sat there, watching how the water streamed—an unenlightening exercise. There was no one about to whom to address a remark, except the order for cognac and coffee. " Un martel et du café, Mademoiselle." " Tout de suite, Monsieur ; " and there it is, the coffee and the cognac, with Mademoiselle ungraciously running off again, and nothing to say but ' It is wet, is it not ? ' A black cat rubbed against my leg and I called Mimi ! Mimi ! and then the black cat washed itself all over to assure me that still more rain was coming. The assurance was not needed. The clouds looked inexhaustible ; and everyone who passed, from the stout man with the enormous umbrella to the cross-eyed girl from the baker's shop, would have washed himself all over if that had been the human way of expressing the dolorous news that still more rain was coming.

When at length a train arrived and carried me off, the clouds and my pessimism both disappeared ; for on arrival at Die I walked into sunshine. The whole town lay shining like a new shilling, and the wet cobbles, with the light upon them, were like the scales of a newly-landed fish. If anything could be calculated to predispose one's thoughts in favour of a town, it is the arrival



THE ROMAN THEATER AT ORANGE, PROBABLY DATING FROM THE SECOND CENTURY, IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE RELICS OF ANTIQUITY IN FRANCE.

OLD MENTON, A SECTION OF ONE OF THE RIVIERA'S MOST FASHIONABLE RESORTS, IS A TYPICAL FRENCH TOWN UNTOUCHED BY THE CURRENTS OF MODERN LIFE THAT SWIRL ABOUT IT.



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after a wet journey, to find that town basking in the warm, white sunshine. It looked much older, much nobler than Crest. It wore an air of dignity, which only great age could have given it ; and, although comparatively a large town, it had the aspect of a village, a peculiarly rambling, high-pitched village. Perhaps it would be better to say that it seemed like several villages flung together in a heap.

It lies in the midst of a great green fertility, at the confluence of two fine rivers, the Drôme and Meyrosse, sheltered on the south by the mountains of Serre-Chauvière ; on the west by the southern spurs of the Lente, on the north by the Vercors and on the east by escarpments of the Glandasse. From the little hill behind there is a beautiful view across the valley, showing a land rich in corn and the vine, all green and soft, as fine a garden as any town could wish. It is therefore a green basin held in on all sides by comparatively gentle hills, which never oppress, like the high Alpine peaks, but rather give a sense of amiable guardianship.

Die was an important town when Christianity came first to its doors, in the third century, and although a bishop suffragan was established there, it was many years before the people took kindly to the new order. Perhaps the Lydian atmosphere of this enclosed plain, and the abundance of good wine, like modern Clairette de Die, which the hillslopes produced, created characters more fitted to the frolics and intemperateness of paganism ; and the temple of Cybele was more to their liking than the Church of Christ which succeeded it. Anyhow, the bishops and monks who came hither were set a hard task, and even when the doctrines of the Unknown God were at length imposed upon Die, its citizens continued to be quarrelsome and difficult on all matters of their faith.

In 1212 they massacred Bishop Humbert on the steps of his own cathedral. Fifty-four years later, when Pope

Gregory X united the diocese with that of Valence, the inhabitants showed bitter resentment against their bishops and canons, and rose up in a body to assert their freedom. They were unsuccessful, however, and, perhaps because they had so often, and so catastrophically, tried the patience of their spiritual masters, they ceased henceforth to be a bishopric. The traditions of Die's stormy ecclesiastical history were well maintained throughout the Calvinist insurrections.

To a great many of the people Calvinism seemed just one step farther away from the jolly faith of their ancestors, and a spirited resistance was put up against the harsh doctrines of the reformers. But, I know not how, Calvinism presently triumphed, and its adherents completely dominated Die, even establishing a Protestant academy and presently restoring the town to quiet and prosperity. Under Louis XIV the academy was suppressed and Protestantism outlawed. They say in books which seem to be sufficiently unbiased, that the proscription of the Protestants ruined the trade and industry of Die, which presently dwindled to one half its former importance. The diocese, re-established by Pope Innocent XI in 1687 was finally and irrevocably suppressed at the Revolution.

Poor Die! As if it had not already had its fill of suffering, the Revolution brought it to its lips in brimming cups. Louis-Joseph Lagier de Vaugelas, Canon of Die, has left an interesting account of how the Revolution came to Die. On 13th July, 1790, he wrote in his diary: "There has been erected in the Champs des Cordeliers, outside the St. Vincent Gate, a triumphal arch. It is octagonal, with four large faces, about thirty feet high, and surmounted by a dome and a flag. On the first face of the dome is inscribed: LA NATION, LA LOI, LE ROI. On the second: TOUS LES HOMMES NAISSENT EGAUX EN DROITS. On the third: NULLE DISTINCTION

que Celle des Talents et des Vertus. On the fourth: L'Amour de la Patrie est la Passion des Hommes Libres. In the middle was a platform about eight feet high on which rested an altar surmounted by a dais."

Wars, religious squabbles and the like, have died away in the valley of the Drôme, and Die sits quietly, in its vast enclosure. Ancient and composed, it lies with its back to a verdant hill, and the houses of antiquity that line its streets bear the adornment of Age and Time as an old grande dame her chaplet and jet. The air it breathes is fresh and soft, the water it drinks, from the cold mineral spring at the foot of the Glandasse, seems charged with the attributes of eternal youth; and so, for that matter, does the wine of its gentle slopes. Down at its foot the river runs, cool and green, freshening year in and year out the spacious fields where Die performs its Arcadian tasks.

In the streets there is the dignified bustle of a town devoted to the soil from which its wealth has sprung. But there is one long street, which, above all, is Die. This is the Rue Nationale, a thin brown highway, lined by grey and ochreous buildings, of all shapes and sizes, and every form of adornment, and continued by a viaduct bridge across the valley of Meyrosse, as though to say: The town and the fields here are one and indivisible. The little streets that slip, with an air of mischief, like a runaway boy, from the mother street to the ascending maze of dwellings, are filled with the quiet circumstance of the Past, with little intriguing doors, quaint shops, and old folk who sit on the steps to gossip. And here is a church, cool and dim; there an open place, cobbled and shady; here an arched gateway that leads to courtyards ancient, flowery and secretive; and there a garden, where the scent rises with that overpowering sweetness known only to the south. And there are cafés to sit at; pretty girls to admire; impudent children to

avoid rapidly; old men to talk with; and laughter to join—for the spirit that was banished from the Temple of Cybele lingers yet in the streets of Die.

The Rue Nationale will bring you to the Place du Marché, the Market Place. Then it takes you over the viaduct which crosses the Meyrosse, which you visit because it is pleasant to walk thus, and the view from the viaduct, down the valley, is very beautiful. Retracing your steps you take the Rue Saint-Marcel, which was at one time a Roman road, and presently you come to a fine old Roman Arch of Triumph, just a simple, noble span without any pretentious architecture, but happily adorned with foliage and the fragments of heroic figures. My own archæology was insufficient to translate these fragmentary and mutilated decorations, and I cannot discover the origin or significance of the arch. It is obviously of much later date than the campaigns of Marius, which, in any case, were sufficiently commemorated farther south, at St. Remy and near Aix, where their existence is appropriate; and Cæsar did not march this way. Doubtless it was raised to honour some minor Marshal of Rome, whose legions were established at Die during the pacification of Gaul. One likes to theorize on old relics, which are found in unexpected places. Great authorities indulge that liking, often with as little success. Unhappily, this monument is constructed of sandstone, ill-fitted to withstand the march of centuries; and it is further disfigured by additions made in the Middle Ages, with the object of turning it into a fortified gate.

Coming back into the Rue Nationale, I was directed down the second road on the left, which brought me to the Place d'Horloge and the Cathedral. None of these old churches can be less than agreeable; and this of Die, though it has no features of supreme architectural interest, is more than that. It has the prevailing Roman-

esque aspect one expects south of Lyons, with, however, sufficient of the Gothic influence manifest to give it a unique appearance. It is not far enough south to be a true child of classic sympathies, and not far enough north to display the soaring romanticism of Gothic work. The classic influence predominates. That is explained, not so much by outside influence as by the fact that its predecessor was raised upon the ruins of a Roman temple, and the builders of the present church were influenced by the church that went before. Drastic restorations complicated the architecture in the seventeenth century, and the most interesting feature left is the Romanesque-Gothic belfry, which is surmounted by a wrought-iron steeple.

The church is gained through an eleventh century porch, which is supported by granite columns claimed to have come from the former temple of Cybele ; and on its south arch are a number of interesting carvings, curious figures, somewhat crudely imagined, which remind one somewhat of the sculptures adorning that Gothic exile, San Zeno, at Verona. There are remains of a twelfth century Passion, well worth examination, over the doorway, in which is also embedded a Roman stone. The scenes from the Passion are unique in their way, and extraordinarily realistic. I doubt not that if a sculptor of to-day were to execute his work in the manner of these old craftsmen, he would achieve a wide respect, due, it would be said, to his startling realism. Even art seems not to progress, but rather to revolve in a cycle. This group, on the doorway of the cathedral, dates from the twelfth century.

The interior is not remarkable. It is rather gloomy. One asks for a little more colour, and a little more light ; but there are several things worth a pause as you wander through the dim vastness. The Romanesque pulpit, although rather heavy, is of very fine and precise work-

manship; and the carvings in the choir, dating from Louis XIV, are sufficiently decorative. The most curious thing of all, to my mind, is a seventeenth century tomb, surmounted by a Last Supper of most unconventional appearance. Christ and the apostles are seated at meagre board, robed in the generally accepted costumes of their land and period; and seated with them, a little self-consciously, are the donors, gowned in costumes of the Restoration. It is not as incongruous as one might expect, and it is certainly attractive.

The southern portal has been known as the Porte-Rouge since the murder in front of it of Bishop Humbert.

A street on the left of the cathedral leads to what was once a Catholic Chapel, and is now a Protestant Temple. Its former allegiance is commemorated in the mutilated sculptures and relics of ancient episcopal arms, on the door. Opposite this are several pleasing Renaissance houses, quite handsome and solid-looking, with the decorative pieces well-spaced and appropriate. Modern architects could learn a good deal from these façades. If we must have Renaissance architecture everywhere, let us take as our models any one of a thousand which are to be found in the towns of southern and central France. Our own Renaissance domestic architecture is childish compared with the normal examples in France.

Continuing along this street you come to what is known as the Promenade de la Marie, a pleasant, flowery space which was formerly the enclosed garden of the Bishops of Die. Its happy nature is heightened by the view it gives across the Drôme. Here there is a bust of the Comtesse de Die by Madame Clovis Hugues, erected in 1888 by several patriotic societies, who, one supposes, had been stirred by the pathetic love and noble poems of the great lady of Die.

The Comtesse de Die appears to have been nothing of the sort, but that is of no importance. She lived in the

twelfth century and was the wife of Guillaume de Poitiers, Count of Valentinois, and her name was Beatrix. She was the daughter of the Dauphin of the Viennois. It is certainly of this that tradition speaks, but she has been confused with her daughter-in-law, Philippa, wife of the Count of Die. Philippa also wrote poems, and very good ones according to the testimony of an Italian writer, Francesco da Barberino ; and her praises were often sung by the troubadours of Provence. It is a pity that none of her works has come down to us, for if they were of a quality similar to that in the poems of Beatrix, her mother-in-law, they were well worth preserving.

The so-called Comtesse de Die is one of the greatest of the troubadours though we only have four love songs, and one tenzon, or love-plaint, to judge her by. Her works showed an extraordinarily spontaneous passion, and were addressed to none other than the famous troubadour and knight, Raimbaud d'Orange. This attractive gentleman was the son of Guillaume d'Omelas, of the House of Montpellier, and of Tiburge, daughter of the Count of Orange, who died on an expedition to the Holy Land. By the will of his mother he shared with her other son the earldom of Orange, and relinquishing the name of Omelas he took instead the title of Orange.

His poems are not notable either for delicacy or taste, and display a barbarous ingenuity in the matter of rimes ; but for all that, they show a nimble wit and a poetic fervour. In his personal life he was a libertine of singular accomplishments, and, even for a libertine, strangely inconstant. One is safe in assuming that his tongue was in his cheek as he wrote those stanzas of devotion which captured many a high-born and romantic heart, so that husbands were perpetually on the watch when the lively young troubadour happened to be in the neighbourhood;

for it was known that he respected none, and that he considered all women as fair game for his wiles. It was an opinion which too many of his victims seemed to share.

One of these was our Comtesse de Die, who lived to rue the passion he had awakened. This is one of her communications, addressed to him in a moment of doubt: "If my merit, my birth, my beauty, do not speak to you sufficiently in my favour, do justice to my heart; for you will find none else so tender. Wherever you may be I send this song as my messenger. And I would know, O noble and handsome friend, why you are so cruel to me? Is it pride? Is it hatred? Messenger! Thou must say to him that pride has caused the fall of many people!" It was a long and pathetic complaint of sorrow because she saw ingratitude in one whom she loved far more than all her possessions. Beauty, merit, skill, nothing served to soften his cruelties. She had been deceived and betrayed, as though she were a low person lacking in the finer delicacies of love. Because he was superior intellectually must he treat her disdainfully, she who had been so honest with everyone? He was sought by all the ladies, but surely he was too acute not to see who loved him most.

Raimbaud's attempts at consolation were not strikingly successful. He wrote: "I should regard him as my benefactor who would hang me, or tear out my eyes. Oh, the beauty I have betrayed! I implore your clemency. If you are not inexorable, I swear by my father's soul that nothing could restrain me. I would hasten to see you; nor return for many days. But one cannot give way. Meanwhile, God pardoned the good thief; and my fault is not so enormous, for I only love the other ladies in so far as they bear the image of her from whom I crave mercy. Singular excuse! The mistress of a chevalier or a troubadour, was she not always a

beauty without parallel?" Raimbaud's reply was ineffective either as poetry or consolation.

In the Mairie, or town hall, there is a delightful old mosaic, representing Euphrates, Tigris, Phison and Gihon, the rivers of terrestrial paradise, and very cool, blue rivers they are, sorely tempting on a warm day; for just such rivers as this one may hope to cleave in the warmth not of Paradise on earth, but of Heaven above. This charming old mosaic used to serve as a paving to the eleventh century baptistery, of which it is probably the only relic. Also in the Mairie, in the Salle des Archives, there is an interesting panel of Louis XVI painted on paper; and on the ground floor there is a small collection of Roman antiquities, without anything notable. In the wall of the courtyard is embedded an ancient taurobolium, or altar, used for the sacrifice of bulls.

It was a warm noonday when I finished my inspection of the Mairie, and I again sought the Place de l'Horloge, there to seat myself at a café table—an inclination much too frequent in these parts—and watch the slow pageant of life through the square. That is a practice always possible and always agreeable in these little towns of France. It makes sightseeing pleasant in itself, the knowledge that a café is always adjacent, from which to look upon a leisurely world. The rustling plane trees, the warmth, the gabled façade opposite, the yawning of a dog too lazy to get out of the sun, the silky sense of being wrapped up in a cocoon of sunshine, and the knowledge that all who pass, in herb-filled drays or coated in the garb of a servant of the State, or simply lounging nobodies, are wrapped in like manner—this is happiness! This is peace and blessed serenity!

Before setting out for Die I had written to the present owner of No. 32 Rue de Villeneuve, requesting that I might be permitted to inspect the library and antiquities

collected there. Permission was forthcoming ; indeed, a very courteous and gracious invitation awaited me at Die, and of all the pleasant memories I have of that town none is more vivid or pleasurable than the afternoon I spent, in the company of a charming and cultured old gentleman, wandering among the precious things that have been gathered, over many years, by Monsieur de Fontgalland.

There was a rich and yet sober Renaissance chest sculptured entirely in wood ; another chest of Romano-Byzantine design, and doubtless of that period ; another little chest which once belonged to the unhappy Diana of Poitiers, whose arms it bears. I lingered over that. Diana has always attracted me, in the like measure as her usurper, Catherine de Medici, has repelled. There are some lovely little amber toys, taken from a child's tomb, pretty, pathetic little things ; a ' heat ' knife from Roman baths ; some ancient iridescent tear-vases ; a number of delicious champagne goblets, crying aloud to be filled to the brim ; and some exquisite Venetian glass. A portrait of Lesguières is there, and some fine old Gothic panels. I fingered terra-cotta lamps, like those which the wise virgins bore ; and metals of every description. But I always came back to Diana's carved chest, and the precious little amber toys, which have only sober visitors to play with. In the library there are some extremely important manuscripts illustrating the ancient history of Die.

Whilst at Die I was taken along a pleasant country road through the beautiful valley of the Oule, a quiet, sequestered valley of which La Motte-Chalançon is the market town. At the upper part of the valley is the little village of Montmorin, where Philis de la Tour-du-Pin-la-Charce was born in 1645.

Philis was a sort of local Joan of Arc. In 1692 the Piedmontese, having unexpectedly penetrated into

Dauphiny, were assured of a successful advance through the valleys, where no garrisons existed to obstruct them But Philis armed the peasants of the Oule and, placing herself at their head, went forth to battle, meeting the enemy and repulsing them at every point. According to Voltaire, the grateful king of France treated her as a brave officer of his army, and honoured her in his Court. Madame Deshouillères, writing to congratulate her on living so far from Paris, enclosed this verse :

"Ne vous plaignez jamais de votre destinée ;
Il vaut mieux mille et mille fois
Avec vos rochers et vos bois,
S'entretenir toute l'année
Que de passer une heure ou deux
Avec un tas d'étourdis, de coquettes :
Des ours et des serpents de vos sombres retraites
Le commerce est moins dangereux."

That, however, failed to frighten Philis. She went to Court and frankly enjoyed it ; and in 1731 she published her memoirs, which are well written and graceful. Her descriptions of the French Court make that institution appear in a very happy light. She says : " There is no time in the year when the journey to Fontainebleau had appeared so magnificent. The grandeur and power of our august monarch manifested itself in everything, and the foreigners could not gainsay that his Court was above all others in the Universe. There was a great number of very superb balls, where the dresses and jewels sparkled everywhere : that of the day of the Queen of Spain's marriage surpassed all the others in beauty, although, after seeing the first ones, it was difficult to imagine that anything could actually exceed them. Despite the depth of sorrow which the new queen could not dissemble, she danced with so noble an air that she appeared entirely worthy of the rank which destiny had marked out for her.

Mlle. de Vallais, her sister, at present Queen of Sardinia, deserved the applause of the public; but when Mlle. de Blois, who, shortly after married M. le Prince de Conty, appeared on the Seine, everyone was convinced that the Graces had taken supreme pleasure in forming her, and had lavished on her without stint their most precious treasures. Never had one perceived such entire charm, such delicacy, such an air of grandeur, combined with so tender a sweetness that it was dangerous to look at her fixedly, since the pleasure of the eyes passed quickly to the heart. She evoked, and will evoke always, the admiration of those who have the honour to see her in the rôle of ornament of the Court."

All this seems very different from the exploits of the vigorous young girl who led her peasants up the valley of the Oule to do battle with an enemy far larger and far better disciplined. But it is all in accord with the spirit of those times, and with the zest for romance, in all its forms, which moved the heart of every lady and gentleman in France.

VII

AVIGNON

I ADMIT to a propensity for dawdling. In other words, I am a lazy devil. I cannot see any very good reason for being energetic. The sort of thing one hurries for has far too many pursuers. I don't suppose it is worth all the rushing and jostling. I like food that is eaten slowly, lingeringly; and wine I like, which is sipped gently, while the hours pass. A good book is sweet to me, if it extend over days and days—one, two, three volumes, by all means, if the writer of them has something to say. I would never do any real work unless I had to; but that is a vain thought.

I determined to indulge these disreputable desires during my idle visit to Provence, and that is why, when I arrived in Avignon, one warm summer morning, the first thing I did was to sit down in the shadow of its walls. The cool promenade which marches with them was already lively with colour and sound. On the road were heavy drays coming in from the fields with baskets of grapes. They raised a cloud of dust, which the wind dispersed to cover the leaves of the trees, so that a line of cypresses on the far side of the road was as grey as the old ramparts.

A dusty, hot little earth, but how clean and virginal the blue sky above, and how green, like water, the trees away in the distance, shelving up to pink hills! The morning passed, and the heat increased. I sauntered to the Place du Palais and took lunch at the little inn on the corner; and contentedly I returned to the hotel to sleep

an hour or so. Then, towards evening, I walked up to the papal garden, high set on its hill. I looked upon a mottled congeries of stone buildings, grey and brown, lorded over by the resolute mass of the palace, and held within a belt of walls that is ready, I believe, to burst from such unseemly pressure. The Rhone lay beside it, a broad line of jade on a broader surface of rosy pebbles, and over against the far bank rose the tall donjon of that thieving, blackmailing rascal, Philip the Fair.

Philip's exploits are full of drama. Indeed, all Avignon is garrulous with dramatic gossip of the time when successors to Apostle Peter chose to give more adequate proof of their mortality than even the *Sedia Stercoraria* provided. The Avignon obedience, which writers Italianate have called the Babylonish captivity, may not have been a good thing for the church, but it brought much gaiety and much nobility to the Comtat.

Small wonder that in every lane and square of this city lurks that ancient glory. Outwardly, however, it is much the same as all these towns of the Midi, quiet and graceful, perhaps a little prone to give itself airs above its neighbours, but once and for all settled down to the undistinguished career of a French provincial city. The spirit of a unified France is here for good or ill, in spite of Daudet's illusion that the people were happier when a prince of the Holy Catholic Church ruled from the Rochers des Doms. "Ah! Happy time! Happy town!" he exclaims in *La Mule du Pape*. "Halberds without an edge, state prisons in which to keep wine cool. Never any scarcity; never any fighting. That is how the popes of the Comtat ruled their people, and that is why their people have missed them so much." The picture is a little overdone, like the period it deals with.

The papal garden is a likeable place, the first to make for after one's arrival in Avignon. It spreads in a homely array of flowering shrubs and little ponds, like

duck-ponds, over the pate of the Rochers des Doms. A few white statues, homely too, rise from the foliage to honour local poets, painters, and even an agriculturalist, who introduced the cultivation of madder. Here and there are seats, overlooking the Rhone on one side and the city on the other. You see the land of Provence in the distance, grey-green and black, except where it is veined by pink, dusty roads; and above you is a sky sapphire blue, blue like Vivarini's window in San Zanipolo at Venice; and between this happy earth and that ineffable sky lies the bunched-up city of Avignon, which the sun, later on, will set afire.

What dreams go up in the smoke of that ephemeral fire! Avignon at bay before 50,000 horse, and footmen innumerable, with banners unfurled, bucklers flashing in the sun—an invincible host in crusade against the heretical Albigenses in the year of our Lord 1226, 'in the spring-time, when kings are wont to go forth to war.' The smoke of the flaming city curls, like the silken standard of Louis, the saintly king whose red and gold army, on its way to the Holy Land, lodged within its walls. These are as nothing to the hieratic splendour of the papal city, when kings and princes, earls and dukes, and all the strutting personages of Christendom, stood suppliant without its doors.

According to Petrarch this was no happy period. The cardinals and priests of Avignon were monsters sustained by human blood. They swam in riches when they should have fished for sinners. There was no faith, nor charity, nor religion, nor any fear of divine retribution; but only lust and avarice. Even the city itself was foul, so that, when the wind blew it was disgusting, and when it dropped there was pestilence. But now the rising vapours of the sunset town leap in a tumultuous glory of magnificence. Cardinals in costliest silks gathered around their pontiff 'like flaming

torches around a brilliant star,' tapestries, gold and silver vessels, lavish equipages, beautiful women, embassies, bonfires, fireworks, hangings, feastings!

From my seat in the little garden I watch the final extinction of the sun. The fire is dead, and the last, thin wisps of smoke drift into darkness from the charred heap of the city, which is like the ashes of Savonarola's bonfire of vanities. Peace! That splendour, that stir of arms and flashing of silks, what of it? An *Aurora Australis* across the sky of Europe; a spectacle to gaze at, momentarily awed. It has passed. Against the serene heavens stands Avignon's reflection, as of a little city of the south, quiet and serene.

Peace, did I say? How can it be? Perhaps, to-day, I am peculiarly susceptible. Last night I stood in Lyons, where the rain had fallen steadily for some days. The Saone ripped through the cold heart of the city, and my soul was chilled. Now it is Avignon, soul of Provence, *riante et douce Avignon*, and a warm day has given place to darkness, and the darkness has given way, subtly, to the moon. There are shadows on the court that face the papal palace, and the moonlight falls athwart them, or rather cuts athwart them, for its edges are like gleaming steel save on the machicolations of the palace, where it hangs serenely and gently, like a row of sleeping doves—as so it may be, for all that I can tell, so lofty are the towers of the popes.

How, in this setting, can one banish the ghosts of Avignon? Processions pass, the soldiers of the pope swing down through flowery streets to sing in Latin in the squares; there is the sound of flying shuttles, weaving cloth of gold; there is singing over looms, and the beating of tambourines down by the bridge, where they dance:

Sur le pont d'Avignon
on y danse, on y danse.

which should, I believe, be *sous* le pont, because they danced on the island of Barthelasse, which is beneath the bridge.

I suppose it was a happy time. Even those who suffered misery at the Papal Court, or were assassinated, or locked in an iron cage suspended from a papal tower, there to swing in full gaze of the multitude—even these were a part of the frolic. Can you not see that swinging cage, and the pale-faced, hungry cardinal within, while the lace-makers' bobbins tick louder, and the metal-workers beat with still greater zeal on their silver chalices, and the begging friars swing more cheerily their rattles? That was a time of contrast. Some grew fat on it, and some grew lean; but who, at this distance, would have it otherwise? It was a pleasant question to debate that night at dinner, and, later on, the visions it aroused made a soothing pillow.

. . . . . .

It is probably a very good idea to take the antiquities of a city in some sort of historical sequence; but that is a bother. It is better to wander easily, visiting what takes your fancy; and if, at the end of the time at your disposal there are a number of things left unseen, what of it? Perhaps you will come again. Almost assuredly if you can, you will come again. As for taking Avignon in historical sequence, that were a task for more serious-minded men than I. There are, moreover, a great many gaps, and, as far as I can see, no beginning and no end.

No beginning certainly; for how and when this city was founded is beyond historians. Certain chroniclers of the Middle Ages begin their story of Avignon at the Deluge. Fantoni, in his *Istoria d'Avignone*[1] says that there are those who refer the foundation of this city to the time of the Patriarch Noah, who, after the Flood and

[1] See *Avignon*, by Professor Okey (Dent's Medieval Towns).

before the Confusion of Tongues, put forth to sea with his three sons and showed them the coasts of the earth which he had divided among them : Europe he assigned to Japheth, who, ten years thereafter, sent forth chiefs to found colonies. Of these chiefs one sailed up the mouth of the Rhone and founded the city of Avignon, which, from a Colonia that it then was, became a Tetrapolitina thirty-three years later, when Samotes Dis, fourth son of Japheth, was sent to Gaul by Noah and, entering the Rhone from the Mediterranean Sea, landed at Avignon. "But these," says Fantoni, "are fables, mere empty dreams, repugnant to Holy Scripture ; and all the learned flee from them, with one accord, both with sail and oars."

Not usually in the company of learned men, I nevertheless take my seat, wistfully, in the vessel by which, with one accord, they flee from the traditional genesis of Avignon. It arouses an amusing image. Learned and indignant *savants*, led by the righteous Fantoni, clattering through the cobbled ways of dim tradition to where, at the quayside, are the craft of superior scholarship waiting to carry them, as fast as sail and oars can accomplish, to the sterile shores of pure reason. Upon the crests of tradition stand their ignorant predecessors, holding their sides with laughter at the spectacle of so much haste on the part of learned men, who always look ridiculous when in a hurry.

I suppose the only relics of Avignon's earliest-known history are those in the Musée Calvet, though even these are not peculiar to this city, but were gathered, through many years, from all parts of Provence. This museum is one of the completest in Provence, and probably the most instructive. The collections have undergone many vicissitudes, in spite of which the museum is now remarkably adequate in its library, its relics and sculptures, and even its pictures. The name it bears is derived from a famous

physician and collector, Dr. Calvet, who bequeathed to it his fortune, his library, his paintings, statues, precious stones and other *objets d'art*, and these were presently housed in the elegant Hôtel de Villeneuve-Martigan.

Of the Roman collection on the ground floor I was interested chiefly in the beautiful Venus of Pourrières found near the site of the great battle between Marius and the Barbarians. Medieval and Renaissance sculpture is well represented. There is a precious Virgin and Child, exquisitely tender, done for the Celestins in the fifteenth century, and happily preserved through all the trials of Revolutionary Avignon.

These are agreeable things to see. Nevertheless, it is with a sense of relief—I had almost said, a cry of exultation—that one comes to the pictures on the first floor ; for they are very beautiful pictures ; in instances, they are very odd pictures. One of the choicest of the Renaissance pieces is Nicolas Froment's St. Siffrein and St. Michael, a masterpiece of exquisite design and fullness, that has upon one much the same sensation as a rich, ripe peach would have, so rounded and deep are the colours. To the same artist is attributed a double-panel painting, of St. Michael on the one and the Annunciation on the other ; but the attribution is doubtful.

The small series of *Primitifs Français* are among the most attractive things in the collection. Of these the most notable is St. Pierre de Luxembourg in Ecstasy, which was exhibited in Paris in 1904. Pierre de Luxembourg, amid the intrigues and corruption then rife in France and Italy, was rare in his nobility and saintliness, so that the people who knew him, or came under his influence, felt themselves in the presence of someone outside and beyond the vexing ills then rankling in the organs of the body politic.

Among the Primitives there is also a very beautiful Adoration of the Infant Jesus, which at one time was considered to be a work by Gerard of Haarlem. It is now conceded to be a fifteenth century Provençal piece. The knightly donor is probably a portrait of Charles the Timorous, and beside him kneels a sainted bishop. I returned to this picture several times, because I found it so pleasing to look upon the Virgin's sweet face, which is of a remarkable and delicate nobility, and the castle, though not a very complicated castle, is essentially of Provence.

There are some good examples of Joseph Vernet, the great marine artist; but now, I think, the pictures of exceptional interest are by other than Provençal artists. The Renaissance was almost a negligible movement in the sphere of Provençal painting. Of other French artists there are characteristic works by Poussin, and an almost perfect example of Louis David: this portrays the death of Joseph Bara, a young drummer-boy, who, mortally wounded, clasps the tricolour to his breast. The picture of this youthful hero was done at the request of the National Convention. John Addington Symonds, in his *Sketches and Studies in Southern Europe*, writes of this picture: "The little drummer-boy, though French enough in feature and in feeling, lies, Greek-like, naked on the sand—a very Hyacinth of the Republic, La Vendée's Ilioneus. The tricolour cockade and the sentiment of upturned patriotic eyes, are the only indications of his being a hero in his teens, a citizen who thought it sweet to die for France."

The second room is chiefly notable for the famous ivory Christ sculptured by Jean-Baptiste Guillerman in 1659, for the Pénitents de la Miséricorde d'Avignon.

The library of this museum is one of the richest in Southern France. It includes among its treasures the

Book of Hours used by Pierre of Luxembourg : and has a splendid series of works, from the earliest periods, illustrating the history of Provence.

It is, of course, impossible here to go thoroughly into the possessions of the Musée Calvet, and I have referred only to what peculiarly attracted me. The collections are, however, so rich that it will profit the visitor to inspect them again and again ; and for those who wish to give serious study to the history of Provence it is essential that they spend long hours in this library. But not too long. Public libraries are, of all desolate spots, the most desolate ; and museums, unless taken leisurely, and at intervals, are equally so. I was always glad, after spending an hour or so in Musée Calvet, to come out again and clear my head by taking a walk along the promenade that follows the city's ramparts.

That is always a pleasant exercise. Not that one comes upon any very extraordinary activities. The passage in and out of the city through the various gates, of laden drays and country folk in with their marketable produce, is full of colour and quaint form ; and pleasing enough to the ears, which delight in the crunching of wheels upon sand and the creaking of harness, and the calling of greetings in the soft accents of the south. Here and there are idle people at their favourite sport, *La Boule*, which is a game of bowls played on however uneven a surface, sometimes with extraordinary skill—a happy, lazy game, which one may observe very agreeably in the ease of a reclining posture beneath a plane-tree.

These ramparts were constructed in the fourteenth century by Innocent VI and Urban V. They are nearly seven feet thick, and are flanked by thirty-nine round or square towers, and are pierced by seven gates. Before the coming of Clement VI to Avignon the city was defended only by a double fosse, the earlier quadrilateral fortifications having been destroyed in 1227 at

the command of Louis VIII who marched against Toulouse, taking Avignon on his way, to punish the heretical followers of Count Raymond, son of that Raymond to whom the pope denied a christian burial. The last of this heretical house of Toulouse was finally humbled by the Church on Holy Thursday of 1229, when, as a barefoot penitent, he stood in shame before the portal of Notre Dame de Paris, and won release from the ban of Holy Church by craving absolution and submitting to the utmost humiliation.

The fortifications were rebuilt during the papal régime. They were modified from time to time, and were finally restored by Viollet-le-Duc under the Second Empire. In recent years they have narrowly escaped destruction. The building of the railway first threatened it, and the sacrilege was only prevented by a vigorous outcry from Prosper Mérimée, to whom we owe so much of monumental France. In 1902 the municipality resolved upon the demolition of the unrestored portions, to allow of the greater development of the city, but this also was abandoned as a result of the intervention of the Prefect of Vaucluse.

One of the advantages of these walls is that they may be observed in ease and leisure, and the contemplation of them may be interrupted by whatsoever incident avails. Churches, palaces and museums demand more or less undivided attention, though I fear they rarely get that from me ; but the walls of a city are observed unconsciously. One frequently passes in and out of their gates, and often, as one stands at the head of some street, one's receding vision ends with the machicoulis of walls.

. . . . . .

At Avignon, in the evening, there is not overmuch to do. It was my practice to dine at the little *auberge* off the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. It would be an idle,

lingering dinner, with an old French gentleman for companion. We would both be seated by seven-thirty, and two hours later the patron and his wife would join us, to sit and gossip for another hour. Discourse ran easily, in divers channels. For the first two hours it was mostly of books, and of philosophic systems and the ultimate mankind. Very lofty it must have been. When Monsieur and Madame joined us it would continue for a while in the same vein, though it always ended in a discussion on wines, which were sufficiently ultimate, I have no doubt. And at the end, when we parted, it would be of ourselves that we talked. It is as good a way as any other in which to pass an evening.

Now, 'on a day when the sun was darkened,' a young child named Bénézet lay among his father's sheep, in a green field; and as he lay there he was startled to hear a voice from heaven, saying "*Fieou mieou, aus la vos de Jésu Christ.*" Little Benet was troubled at the sound of the voice, but he was reassured by its gentleness. The voice was of Jesus Christ, and bade the little shepherd build a bridge across the Rhone. "I have only three farthings," said the boy, "How then, shall I build a bridge over the Rhone?" "Even as I shall show thee," answered the voice.

An angel came and led him to the place on the Rhone where he must build the bridge, there leaving him. Sorely troubled, for the Rhone was a mighty stream to bridge, he besought the ferryman to carry him across to the other side, where stood the city of Avignon, which, after much haggling, the ferryman agreed to do. Once in Avignon he sought out the bishop, who was preaching to the people, and cried to him, in a loud voice: "Stay, hear my words, for Jesus Christ hath sent me to you, that I shall build a bridge over the Rhone."

The Bishop thought him an impious mocker, and

had him taken to the city provost to be punished ; and the provost also reviled him, but added : " There is a great stone at my palace, and if thou canst move it and carry it away I will believe thy boast." Benet, trusting in God, agreed to the test ; and the bishop was told of it, so that he, and all the townsfolk, came up to the provost's palace that they might behold " the marvels thou pratest of."

Having come to the great stone, that thirty ordinary men could not have moved, little Benet lifted it up as easily as if it had been a small pebble, and carried it to the river's edge where he laid it down to be the foundation stone of the bridge. The multitude fell on their knees at this great marvel of the Lord, and the provost called him Saint Bénézet, and great quantities of silver pieces were cast at his feet, wherewith to build the bridge.

" Dearly beloved brethren, ye have heard in what manner was begun the Bridge of Saint Bénézet, wherefore ye have all become participants in that great benefit ; and God wrought many miracles on that day, for the blind were made to see, the deaf to hear, and the crooked were made straight, and there were numbered eighteen of them." Very soon, every road converged upon the bridge of Avignon, because it was the only stone bridge across the Rhone between Lyons and the sea. Its importance, therefore, may easily be conceived. Little Benet was, in truth, the founder of the bridge, in that he was chief of a community of friars established for the purpose of building bridges, running ferries, and generally attending to the needs of travellers along the rivers of Provence. He was also responsible for the chapel of St. Michael, which is still in complete preservation on the bridge.

In wandering through these cities of France it is my

custom to proceed without any definite plan, so that I come upon things unexpectedly, and therefore add the piquancy of surprise to the pleasure of seeing; so, also, one sees a great deal that one should not see, like quarrels, and brawls, and the gawky paraphernalia of domestic squalor; but that is all in a merry day, and it is strange how the eye that has absorbed the subtle sweetness of plastic saints, in aromatic churches, will view composedly, a minute later, the contorted gestures of a sinner in his cups.

A drunken Provençal always seems to me to be less offensive than any other drunken man. There is a primitive art in his *gaucheries;* a high, Rabelaisian laughter in his coarseness; a hint of the sublime in his grotesqueness. An ugly thing, if only it be ugly enough, becomes a thing of beauty; because there is beauty in all perfection. I wonder if, by that, I mean that the Provençal drunkard is a thing of beauty? Surely not. But so far as perverse human effort may go, he reaches the perfection I speak of, which is the perfection of a hideous gargoyle.

A warm day was responsible for these reflections, which are the impermanent reflections of a mood; and the hours had unfolded to me the peculiar attributes of three churches. In swift recollection I see a day of candle-lit gloom, broken into three by blares of windy light (for the mistral blew), which were the intervals between one church and another. From the sunlit, garish street I would pass to the crepuscular coolness of the church; from the musty gloom of the church I would pass to the airy brightness of the street.

Just to the east of the Place Clemenceau, is the Rue des Marchands; and down there is the Place Carnot, and in a corner of the Place Carnot is an old man with a beard, who lounges at full length in the shadow, moving slowly, certainly, as the sun moves, so that he follows

the shadow all round the square. That is his daily occupation, and I would expect him now, and when the years have elapsed, as certainly as I expect the figures on the Torre del' Orologie in Venice to march in fascinating procession until eternity. But that is of no importance. The Church of St. Pierre more exuberantly denotes the Place Carnot.

It is a happy square. I envy the man with the beard. It is instinct of the south : almost Italian, with its little loggia over an ancient house on the left of the church ; and St. Pierre's almost boisterously ornate, with its bejewelled façade pierced by a graceful ogee portal and two delicate windows. Here are vine leaves and grapes, oak leaves and acorns, with peasant folk in the dear, familiar scenes of medieval husbandry : all so childlike and vivacious that you want to clap your hands delightedly at the sight of it.

Although it is a swan song of the Gothic masons, the advancing Renaissance is discernible in the magnificent sculpture over the doors, which was executed in 1551 ; but the church generally is of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, on the site of a church at least as old as the early tenth century, and, according to tradition, much older even than that.

When you pass through the doors, which are beautifully sculptured with reliefs of the Annunciation of St. Jerome and St. Michael, you are, for the moment, chilled. The exterior frolic had prepared me for an equal lightheartedness ; but I checked my steps on the threshold. Three small children, three small black-clad children, with little white collars, and clasped white hands, and little pointed faces staring fixedly, knelt at their prayers in the rose-lit chapel of St. Philomène. The sacristan moved towards the high altar, turned and bowed, and then moved on into a dimness. It was all so strange and unbelievable, after the gay façade ; so

that I could scarcely believe the reality of those mouldings and medallions without.

It is not from disappointment that one hesitates, but rather out of surprise because it is all so simple, with a gravity and calm unexpected. When I had sufficiently recovered myself I made a leisurely inspection of the interior, rarely halting except out of curiosity at something not of much importance. It is easy to become a slave to ecclesiastical furnishings, whipping up your jaded mind to an interest in statues, pictures and carvings which, in truth, are of no real account. Some joy was mine, however, from the contemplation of a delicious Gothic pulpit; and a certain pleasing vanity from being seated in a richly-carved choir stall. The cardinal's hat and tunic of St. Pierre of Luxembourg are preserved in a small chapel.

Ah! How cool the wind on one's face! The sun's warmth tingles in one's veins, and close by there is a café, with chairs beneath a plane tree. How the leaves rustle, shrill and boisterous! I drain my glass and smoke the French cigarettes to which I have become so easily accustomed. I rise again, and in high fettle make for the little Place du Cloître St. Pierre, with its tall trees and grey old stones, and its exquisite peace. But the wind blows too strongly. It is laden with dust; and the heat is disagreeably intense. In these circumstances one grows irritable. A city like Avignon becomes intolerably noisy and dusty and stony: stones on all sides, ancient and modern, and a dusty volubility everywhere, save in the distant, blue, inaccessible sky.

Then I came to the Rue du Vieux Sextier, a fine, awkward street, full of gusty colours from awnings and balconies. But the wind blew so mightily that the whole street seemed drunken. It is crossed, uneasily, by the Rue des Fourbisseurs, and that brought me to the Place St. Didier, where rises the church of that name.

There is no need to halt before this boorish façade. But I was thankful for the solitude and gloom of the interior, because no mistral blew there, but only the echoes of prayer.

The aisleless nave, with small side chapels, gives an effect of unintentional severity. The craftsmen who built this popular church, in the fourteenth century, were not very clever or imaginative ; and it is noticeable that the Romanesque influence proper to the south has interfered with the Gothic intentions of the architect. There is a beautiful relief here, in the first chapel. Notre Dame de Spasme, a work by Francesco Laurana, is an excellent example of late fifteenth century work, with a sumptuous architectural background. The grouping is vigorous, and the figures, in spite of their grotesqueness, are vigorous too. Francesco was promised 1,200 crowns for this work, but 850 crowns was the most he ever extracted from his employers. There are one or two agreeable pictures.

This was the parish church of the Old Pretender, who came to Avignon in 1716 as James III of England. His welcome to the city was accompanied by great pomp, and Avignon was *en fête* to honour the Chevalier de St. George. Great rejoicings there were, and the exiled Stuart passed from one gaiety to another until, on September 15th, a serious illness overtook him. During the period of his illness the church bells of Avignon were muted ; and at his departure, on January 4th, 1717, the citizens wept. Thirty-two years later, " His Royal Highness, Charles Edward, Prince of Wales," accepted the ready hospitality of the papal city.

My third church on this windy day was St. Symphorien, in the Place des Carmes, which was anciently the church of a Carmelite convent. It was nearly dark when I reached it. I remembered having observed it on another occasion, years earlier, when a

rich portal, beautifully traceried, left upon me a lasting impression; but now, either because it was too dark, or because my memory was at fault, I failed to discern it. It is an agreeable church in the semi-dark, sufficiently reminiscent of its great days. The collection of local pictures has nothing remarkable. Nevertheless, I believe this to be a church well worth study, and I should like to spend a few hours tracing the original features and what relics there are of the old, great monastery.

Enough of churches. The darkness had fallen when I left St. Symphorien's and made my way through the wriggling old streets to my hotel. The wind had fallen also. The heat of the day had passed, and a soft breeze succoured the world. I saw old houses, in their vague, bluish outlines, and dark blobs of indigo where stone adornments protruded. Even the trees were blue, like big blue toadstools; and the blue, billowy skirts of the women, seated on the doorsteps, were like solid pieces of metal. The lights came out, silly little globes, like balls of wadding soaked in a chill, yellow flame. Nobody had anything to say. The streets were as quiet as mice. I could hear my own footsteps echoing on the cobbles, and my own breathing into the still air. Once I stopped, because when everything is still one fancies things; but on turning round I saw nothing except the vista of quiet street, with an old convent tower at the end of it rising above the house tops. I thought, somehow, of the plague-ridden city of 1580.

First a cobbler died. Then a priest. A strange fear took hold of the city. The dread plague-cross began to appear first on one house, then on five, and then on ten. Presently even the papal officers were affected, and doctors and surgeons were stricken. Jesu, have mercy on us! There are neither doctors nor nurses, and our spiritual masters flee! On the seventh day of the great plague a canon of Notre Dame

was suddenly stricken on the very steps of the choir. He fell and his head was cut open, but he crawled to his room and died. The healthy who were left spoke in whispers, and shuffled silently through the afflicted city. The churches were empty. No bells pealed, and the weavers' shuttles were silent.

Long ago! Long ago! I passed swiftly through the silent streets. But presently I heard the subdued murmur of voices, and a minute later I stood refreshed in the Rue de la République, where there were hurrying people, and lighted cafés. Individual footsteps merged into a common, heartening noise, and the entire street was gesticulatory. At the hotel my spirits were restored. It was agreeable to bathe, and then to change, just for the sake of changing; and to walk sedately, like a very cardinal, down the broad steps to the lounge. I drank a cocktail and glanced through a month-old *Sphere;* and presently I rose and went out again to the little auberge in the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, and talked of evolution with my superannuated friend. Bless him! These are modern days!

The next morning it rained. It does rain occasionally in the south; and it is curious how flat and sodden these cities look beneath a downpour. It rained, I remember, when Henry James visited Avignon, and that soured his opinions. Because the Musée Calvet was close to the hotel he made what he calls a 'horizontal dive' thither; and found the museum "neither better nor worse than most provincial museums. It has the usual musty chill in the air, the usual grass-grown forecourt, in which a few lumpish Roman fragments are disposed, the usual red tiles on the floor and the usual specimens of the more livid schools on the walls." A singularly unintelligent comment.

Then he remembers a terribly moist visit to the former palace of the popes. It was an occasion much

associated with an umbrella, " which was not superfluous even in some of the chambers and corridors of the gigantic pile." He calls it a very dull monument, its history whitewashed away ; and speaks of it as " the dreariest of all historical buildings." At the time of his visit, the Papal Palace was still in use as a barracks, and restorations and recoveries, which have since taken place, have revealed much that was absent then. Moreover, it was a Henry James Italianate who visited Provence ; and, like the Roman historians of the Avignon obedience, he looked derisively upon it.

It being a wet day, and there being nothing much to do, and nobody much to talk to, I spent the morning reading about the Papal Palace ; and this, supplemented by a few particulars from Digonnet's *Le Palais des Papes d'Avignon*, is, in brief, the knowledge I acquired. Benedict XII was responsible for the first move in the direction of a great apostolic palace. To see his plans going forward must have been a great disappointment to Petrarch, who had passionately urged Benedict to restore the Papacy to Rome. When Benedict, as Jacques Fournier, the White Cardinal, was chosen by the conclave to be pope, his comment was : " You have chosen an ass." In this remark, says Petrarch, he showed evidence of great judgment. Benedict's architect was Pierre Poisson de Mirepoix, to whom we must attribute two-thirds of the existing structure.

The finest wing of the great palace was raised to the order of Clement VI ; and in its day was known as the great new palace. It contained a large chapel, and the Hall of Justice, " most famous of judicial chambers in Christendom and final Court of Appeal in all questions of international and ecclesiastical law." While the law courts and chapel were in course of erection a new west wing, which is the present façade of the palace, was raised by Clement's master of works ; and this was

completed in August 1351. The last of the great work of construction was done during the reign of Innocent VI, who employed John of Loubières to finish the Tour de la Gâche and to erect a new tower, the Tour de St. Laurent, then known as the *Turres revestiarii*.

A new quarter, now completely disappeared, was added to the Papal Palace by Urban V. This pope, who, in his righteousness and piety was rare among the Avignon pontiffs, decided upon the return of the Curia to the banks of the Tiber. He left Avignon on April 30th, 1367.

Bitter was the disappointment of Urban and his cardinals on their arrival in Italy. At Viterbo, the people rose against them, crying "Long live the People! Death to the Church!" At Rome the great ecclesiastical buildings were little more than blackened ruins, and streets and market places were mere swamps, or heaps of rubbish. Little wonder that the Gallic prelates sighed for their pleasances beside the Rhone. They appealed to Urban, and the pope, with tears in his eyes, turned his face from the Eternal City. On September 24th, 1370, the great palace of Avignon opened its doors once again to Urban and his rejoicing cardinals.

The new quarter of the Palace, which had been built at his command, must have been a gracious comfort to the weary pope. For in it were chambers delicately adorned, and covered areas, and gardens of marvellous beauty. It is a pity that Urban's palace of pleasure has vanished utterly, so that only the fabric of Benedict XII and Clement VI remains.

The interior of the Palace, which, as a result of restoration, is still attractive, must at one time have been very splendid. In the papal accounts, which have been preserved, there are many entries which indicate expensive adornments. Not, however, during the reign of Benedict, who was spare in such things; but chiefly

during the pontificate of Clement VI. Under this luxurious pope Avignon became the resort of every Gallic sculptor and Italian painter on whom the cardinals could lay their hands.

The walls were brilliantly frescoed. Magnificent hangings and tapestries made a fit setting for the rich robes and jewels of the prelates; and all manner of craftsmen in precious stuffs were kept busy. A visitor of to-day would have stood aghast at the richness of jewelled cups, and utensils of gold, ivory, jasper and mother-of-pearl. From the vast kitchens, which could accommodate one hundred cooks with attendant scullions, one gets a fairly good idea of the great feasts that were held amid all this magnificence. And yet, "it is the dreariest of all historical buildings" says Henry James.

I read about these things in the course of that wet morning, and, with the pride of newly-acquired knowledge swelling up within me, I made to visit the Palace itself. It happened that the sun came out, and I almost changed my intentions; for with the dust laid by the morning rain, and the warmth of the sun drawing sweet odours from the earth, it would have been very agreeable to go walking along the roads that wind among vineyards, just without the walls; or to have wandered across to Villeneuve, where more great palaces are tumbling to pieces. But I kept to my purpose. Steadfastly I marched up the Rue de la République, and from the Place du Palais I contemplated the vast dwelling of the Popes.

Time and again I have read in modern works of the incongruity of this great structure, which is so ill-suited to Provence. I suppose that, from a strictly architectural point of view, is correct; but there seems no reason why a Gothic building should not occur in a Romanesque city; or why a Romanesque building

should not appear in a Gothic city, as, indeed, it often does, without loss of effect, in Lombardic towns.

The trouble is that this great palace has an overbearing appearance. Huge in itself, it is raised to still loftier heights by the site on which it is placed; and sure enough, there is something arrogant in the way it looks down upon the rest of the city—an arrogance which the imagination may regard as superb. But you cannot deny that it is a magnificent specimen of fourteenth century military architecture; and the more you gaze at it the more you are impressed by its stupendous isolation from the rest of the city.

The western façade is to me the most striking. You see an area of rotting house-tops, then the line of the foundations, whence spring, like a regiment of soaring towers, the once impregnable walls, stiffened with buttresses, pierced by windows and loopholes, with a skyline of machicoulis, and, behind the Tour Campane, the upsoaring figure of Our Lady of Gifts, in striking contrast to the grim, weather-stained warrior that housed for so long the errant Vicars of Christ, and now stands desolate, a monument to an almost unbelievable past.

The interior is interesting. I fear I cannot say more than that. You visit the Cour d'Honneur, and then the Tour de la Gâche. In the Court of Justice there are some relics of Master Matteo di Viterbo's work. A little museum has been placed in the pope's chapel; and in the Tour de la Garde-Robe are some fourteenth century frescoes. Frescoes are seen in the pope's bedroom, on the second floor; and again in the Chapel of St. Martial, which took 640 days to be painted, at a cost of 103 livres, 6 sous, 3 deniers, or more than £1,000 of modern money.

You should observe the great kitchens, remembering the feasts that were prepared there. A feast in those

days was something to boast about. In May 1308 Clement V was given a State banquet by the Cardinals Arnaud de Palegrue and Pierre Taillefer. "Clement, as he descended from his litter was received by his host and twenty chaplains, who conducted him to a chamber hung with richest tapestries from floor to ceiling; he trod on velvet carpet of triple pile. The table was served by four papal knights and twelve squires, who each received silver girdles and purses filled with gold from the hosts: fifty cardinals' squires assisted them in serving the banquet, which consisted of nine courses of three plates each—twenty-seven dishes in all. The meats were built up in fantastic form: castles, gigantic stags, boars, horses, etc. After the fifth service, a great tower with a forest whence gushed five sorts of choicest wines was carried in: and a tourney was run during the interval between the seventh and eighth courses. Then followed a concert of sweetest music, and dessert was furnished by two trees—one of silver, bearing rarest fruits of all kinds, and the other loaded with sugared fruits of all colours."

Fifth Avenue may well blush with shame! For myself I would doubtless have enjoyed the spectacle; but even to that, as the night wore on, and the forest gushed forth its choicest wines, I would have grown insensible. *Bibamus papaliter.* Nor does the account induce a sense of envy. My little inn suffices; and from all I hear, the Hôtel de l'Europe can devise a dinner not less attractive than Pope Clement's. Napoleon so enjoyed his repast at this hostelry that he instructed Madame Pierron, the owner, to demand of the comptroller at least five francs a head more than he had reckoned on; and later, at the ill-fated Moscow expedition, he reproved some officers, who were grumbling at the fare, with these words: "Think you that you dine at Madame Pierron's?"

Now you mount to the Tour de la Glacière, which was the scene of a terrible massacre in October 1791. Adjoining this is the Tour de Trouillas, where Rienzi was said to have been imprisoned. The "last of the Tribunes" is not a gentleman to my taste; but for all that I cannot help feeling for him a pang of sympathy, when, after being raised to such power and majesty, he was brought so low that Petrarch wept at the spectacle. A man who has risen high and fallen low is a more pitiful sight than he who, being born to majesty, is humbled in the dust. Pride sustains the one: the other is consumed with desperate regrets.

They say that in this tower (which is worth ascending for the view it gives) there once existed a torture chamber—How the bells would peal! and the people dance! "Ah, happy time! happy town!"—; and it is said that a secret passage led from the tower to a secret place on the other side of the Rhone; and that by this route there came a little maid to save Pope Benedict, whom the Royal forces of France were besieging. A pretty memory; and, I hope, a pretty maid.

On the morrow I visited the Cathedral. The exterior is very pleasing, and the manner of it more in accord with what one expects from Provençal masons. You note this especially in the Western portal, which might easily be mistaken for a Roman work. Notre Dame des Doms dates in its present form chiefly from the twelfth century, and its architectural interest has been largely obscured by later restorations. The church is terminated eastward by a semi-circular apse; the piers are plain and square, with simply-moulded capitals, and the plain, semi-circular arches have between them corbels supporting shafts, from the angle colonnettes of which spring transverse arches, dividing the barrel-shaped roof into bays. It is an aisleless church, and therefore very gloomy. I do not think a guide-book

itself could improve on that, except that I am unable to give the measurements.

Note the frescoes by Simone Martini in the porch; and note also the very beautiful tomb of John XXII, who, by comparison with most of his successors, was worthy of it. He was said to have gained election by stating to his Cardinals that he would never mount horse or mule except to journey to Rome. The wily pope then sailed down the Rhone in a boat, entered the palace at Avignon on foot, and never left it again except to cross to the Cathedral. The story is probably apocryphal, but it serves to illustrate John's subtlety.

John gave short-shift to his enemies. A Bishop of Cahors, convicted of being concerned in an attempt to poison the pope, and of bringing about the death of the pope's nephew by witchcraft, was stripped of his vestments and all his honours and placed in jail, where he languished until one sultry day when, after the removal of his clerical tonsure, he was clothed in a sheet, tied by his heels to the tail of a horse, and drawn thus through the city streets, where he was flayed alive, and then, a bleeding and disgusting spectacle, roasted to death by slow fire.

The next day, which was a day of stillness and warmth, with the drone of insects coming from the countryside, like a quiet undercurrent of air, I hired a carriage and drove across to Villeneuve on the other side of th Rhone. We crossed the river by the new, unsightl[e] bridge, and then turning up a dusty road we cam[y] presently to the isolated tower of Philippe le Bel, which was erected in 1307 to guard the western end of the Pont St. Bénézet. It was afterwards used as a French Frontier post and figured largely in the Royalist attack on Benedict the Thirteenth, which I have already spoken about in another chapter.

We came up a deserted road into the little square which faces the Church of Villeneuve, but it was a desolate scene of crumbling brick that lay outstretched before me; and the great Chartreuse was like a ragged, cast-away garment.

Along the old 'Grande Rue' I walked as through a street of tombs, and halted many times for ruined palaces dating from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, which, even in their tribulation, exhaled a melancholy splendour; but there were firmly carved portals and massive oaken doors to fire imagination, and among the ruins of the great Chartreuse I felt it would be easy to sit down and moralise, like a prophet of old. But the prophets of old, except Elisha, were not so bothered by the importunities of ragged children; for the ruined cells and palaces now are the habitations of a population congruous in its general air of destitution.

Of all there is to see in Villeneuve, the most beautiful, I vow, is the ivory Virgin, carved in the fourteenth century by an Italian whose name has been lost to us. It is an exquisitely delicate piece of work which the guardians of the Church of St. Pons make the most of. And if this is the most beautiful thing to see, the most gracious place to halt at is the pretty fourteenth century cloister on the north side of St. Pons. There is a little museum here in which are several interesting paintings; but the only one of distinction is the Coronation of the Virgin by Enguerrand Charanton, traditionally ascribed to King René.

Out of the squalor and dilapidation of Villeneuve I climbed to the summit of the Castle of St. André, which dates from the fourteenth century and is passably preserved. The grave-digger who conducted me through its grim corridors had a fund of good stories concerning its past history, but I felt that

most of them were the product of his own flamboyant imagination. I was very glad to look out from this belvedere over the classic acres of Provence, with their grey-green distances bounded by the fleshy limbs of the Alpilles, and cloven by the Rhone, that noblest of all the rivers of the earth.

VIII

A MEDIEVAL POMPEII

THE road from Avignon lies between vineyards and fields of maize. A tiny canal runs along the edge of it, irrigating the fields on either side, which are all extensively cultivated and divided by cypress or by cane palisades, which serve the purpose of an English hedge. It matters very little what the size of the field ; however small, it will probably be held in by cypress-trees, which bend away from the north-west, showing clearly the pressure of the mistral ; and, if more evidence were needed of the bitter strength of that wind, you can see that on the mistral side of the trees the foliage is thin and blanched, while on the opposite side it is thick and green. Frequently the lower parts of the cypress stems are latticed with cane stalks as still further protection.

Presently I came to Châteaurenard, a small town on the light railway from Barbentane to Orgon, and named after the old castle of the Counts of Provence, which used to stand here. The remains of the château are unintelligible. They recall, however, an incident in the history of the Popes of Avignon ; for it is here that Benedict XIII, Pedro de Luna of Spain, sought refuge after his escape from the Palace at Avignon. Great efforts were made by the Royal party in France to secure his deposition. Benedict had, however, but one answer for all the embassies of Church and State that sought this end, " Sith God of His devyne grace hathe provyded for me the Papalyte, as long as I lyve I wyll be Pope, and I wyll not depose myself neyther for Kyng, Duke, Erle,

nor any treatye, but I wyll abyde Pope." Cardinals might plead and Dukes threaten ; as well try to move the Rocher des Doms to the other side of the Rhone as to humble the pride of Pedro de Luna.

Soon after his elevation there were forces drawn up at Villeneuve to compel his abdication. Benedict had no fear of threats and less of cannon. With his five true cardinals and a brave force of Catalans under Rodrigo, his nephew, he stood his ground against ten times as many. The Avignonais, fickle as they ever were, had thrown in their lot with the Royal seceders, and presently only the stout palace was left to the besieged Pope. Finally a truce was made, and though Benedict remained blockaded in his palace, there were signs that his cause had gained throughout the country. He realized, however, that little could be done from the anxious seclusion of what had literally become a prison, and therefore resolved upon flight.

A plan was laid down by Robert of Braquemont, a Norman knight, and under cover of darkness the disguised Spaniard stole out into the street where friends met and conveyed him to the Aragonais Embassy. Dressed as Braquemont's servant he rode out of the city gates in the early dawn to where a boat lay in readiness. In this he was conveyed with all speed down the Rhone and then up the Durance as far as the road to Châteaurenard. Here the Cardinal of Pampeluna awaited the freed Pontiff, and on swift horses they both galloped to the sheltering walls of the town. Out of the fullness of his gratitude Benedict vowed to build a chapel there and dedicate it to St. Gregory, for it was his holy day.

At Châteaurenard I had halted in front of a café in a cool, watered square that was small and shady, with bees humming among the leaves and a sense of freshness and ease as in a Moorish courtyard. Admirable scene in which to drink a glass of that inexpressibly perfect wine,

not so easy to get nowadays, called Châteauneuf du Pape. The wine, the bees in the dusty plains, the low hum of voices in the cool square, and the flecks of blue sky seen through the leaves, seemed more to me than the unintelligible stones of the ancient castle, so that I resolved upon a lazy hour of sleep. I got no further, however, than the second nod, for as I raised my heavy eye-lids I saw winking at me, rather wantonly, from the centre of the square, a large statue which the citizens had raised to the Durance. Something about it, and the origin of its existence, arrested my failing consciousness. The Durance is represented as a luscious young female too obviously expressing fertility. This full character gives a rather squat appearance ; and it is not, in any case, a notable piece of work, though it serves its purpose as an indication of the gratitude of the citizens to the river.

Old men remember when the Durance was regarded as a scourge, and a Provençal couplet runs,

> "Parlement, mistral, et Durance
> Sont les trois fléaux de Provence."

which, translated as " The stream of words, wind, and water," could be applied with equal justice to-day. There were variants of the proverb, but the Durance was always included. Its riotous waters were perpetually in flood, but the flood was not of a beneficial nature until Adam de Craponne devoted his money and his days to the project of directing the waters to some good purpose. By his efforts he succeeded at last in transforming the river from a scourge into a blessing, and the Durance now eats from its masters' hands.

But the dark, full-breasted figure on the fountain would eat out of nobody's hand : I could well imagine many a man eating out of hers if the dusky, rounded limbs took shape, and the lips smiled. What a commo-

tion it would make among these ox-browed, clumsy idlers in the square of Châteaurenard!—a chuckling thought. Ah, malheur! Galatea is but a legend!

The diligence bumped out of Châteaurenard with only two of us as passengers. My companion was a gentle priest with tiny creases at the corner of his left eye, which seemed to have been accustomed to winking. The priests of these parts are given that way. They are obliged to wink at a good deal, and they do it as one who is *persona grata* in the judgment courts of Heaven.

We passed a beggarly little village and then ran up into a region of flowers. All the fields were given over to rich blooms, as I hope are the fields of paradise. The air itself was overcome with the perfume of stocks, and drooped lazily, like doves on a summer noon. Then we came over the hill into St. Remy, where the people live who grow these flowers I have talked of.

St. Remy was the terminus of the diligence route, and for the rest of the journey to Les Baux, which I desired to reach by nightfall, I had to find some local means if that were available. This is one of the most interesting of Provençal towns, and was the ancient Glanum of the Itineraries. On the site of the old town, rising forlornly from the lonely *Plateau des Antiquités*, are two monuments which have provided pleasure and perplexity to archæologists. One is a triumphal arch attributed to Julius Cæsar, and the other has been called a mausoleum, though it also is probably a triumphal arch. This so-called mausoleum is a work of exquisite proportions, and is certainly one of the finest examples of Greco-Roman art left in Provence. The opinion is held by some archæologists that both these works were raised by Julius Cæsar, the one to celebrate his own successful campaign against the Gauls and the other to celebrate the equally famous campaign successfully undertaken by his uncle Marius.

The two monuments are on or near the site of the ancient city. A Celtic station now known as Castellar was probably the first centre of habitation here. This is six miles east of St. Remy on a northern buttress of the Alpilles to the west of Eygalières. This Celtic population was later absorbed by the Greeks and Romans, who established themselves in the new town of Glanum after the passing of the army of Marius. Glanum was later called Freta, which in its turn became St. Remy in the eleventh century. On the site of the Roman city a considerable quantity of pottery has been discovered: the black fragile ware of the Celts; the light and delicately coloured pottery of the Greeks; the red, solid ware of the Romans, and even the yellow friable pottery of the Arabs.

The so-called Mausoleum is 63 feet high and stands on a square pedestal above which are two main storeys; these are crowned by six Corinthian columns which support a cupola. On the architrave of the north side is an inscription announcing that the monument was set up by three members of the Gens Julia in honour of their parents. Certain authorities consider the inscription to be spurious. The Triumphal Arch, the first of its kind outside Italy, is said to have been erected by Julius Cæsar to commemorate his victories over the Gauls. It is about 40 feet long by 18½ wide, and 25 feet to the under side of the vault. It is a single arch with engaged columns, and is one of the earliest developments of a building which Rome is said to have copied from Etruscan architecture.

There are some interesting carvings which have been explained as follows by Sir Theodore Cook. The carving on the northern side represents Julius Cæsar, a small man with his hand on his tall captive, Vercingetorix, whose head is still preserved, while that of his conqueror has disappeared. On the north-west the personification of triumphant Rome is seated on a pile of

arms beside which is a bound prisoner. On the south-east Vercingetorix is represented chained to a trophy formed of a tree trunk, and opposite him is the weeping figure of Gallia conquered and a prisoner. The fourth carving to the south-west shows another male prisoner and a captured woman.

The road to Les Baux lies through avenues bordered with trees and flower-beds. For the first mile or two there is still the perfume of flowers from St. Remy. Presently it wound among the sterile peaks of the Alpilles, which might have been in Spain or in Greece. The shrivelled rock, with little vegetation upon it save stunted tamarisk and a few pines, is like that which one sees in parts of Thessaly and Asia Minor : the likeness is emphasized by the colour, due to the almost brittle clearness of the light. The scenery might be that of Bœotia or Bythynia. But the peaks of the Alpilles do not rise to the same heights or disclose views of such classical grandeur as, let us say, from Thermopylæ to the Lamian plain below ; the view from the summit of this ridge has, however, something else, a more intimate, warm sense of beauty, the beauty that inspires idylls rather than epics.

Directly opposite, rising from a basin, stood an acropolis like the gnarled trunk of a tree, its base hidden by the saw-toothed line of Val d'Enfer, its summit crowned by the grotesque walls of the château of Les Baux. The village itself, clinging to the lip of the rock, lay in shadow. For the rest it was the pale Crau and the delta of the Rhone flowing like a sea to the horizon ; on the other side a rampart of the Alpilles, strange and jagged, its outline cutting the blue sky, its pink slopes cleft by the dark veins of ravines.

This sight inspires you to fresh vigour as you wind among the hills and descend at last to the valley with Les

Baux above you, growing darker if you come, as I did, toward the end of day. On each side are gigantic caverns cut into the hills and great blocks of building stone like the trilithon of Baalbec. As I rose from this dolorous valley to the slope that led up into Les Baux I heard the sound of a bell. Now the sky was tinted with lilac and the day was almost at an end. Far along the road a herdsman could be seen going home. I slackened my steps, for everything went slowly and solemnly in the long sweet silence :

> "Now was the hour that wakens fond desire
> In men at sea, and melts their thoughtful heart,
> Who in the morn have bid sweet friends farewell ;
> And pilgrim newly on his road with love
> Thrills, if he hear the vesper bell from far,
> That seems to mourn for the expiring day."

The house of Les Baux, in its days the most significant in Provence and of more than passing significance in Europe, has been the subject of much learned inquiry in France. They seem to have been a powerful and ambitious family with enormous possessions and turbulent spirits, and are related to our own royal house by the intermarriage of one of their members with the Prince of Orange. Authorities seem mystified as to the origin of the house, but it is probable that it was once a noble family of the Goths or Visigoths. Robert de Briançon believed them to be natives of the soil of Provence, and others find the cradle of the family in the Alps. No matter. Perhaps Lapise is not much wider of the mark than were his more critical successors when he traces their origin to Balthasar, one of the three kings who followed the star of Bethlehem. He says that they came to Acre and there founded a royal castle. One of the princes later followed Theodosius to Europe and finally established himself in Provence. " Cette fable sortie du

cerveau d'un généalogiste extravagant, guidé non par l'étoile de Béthléem, mais par le désir d'expliquer l'origine de celle à seize rayons des armes de la famille." That was the comment of a learned member of the Congrès Archéologique de France in 1876, so it is perhaps as well to say no more about it.

The family is first mentioned towards the end of the tenth century, when they won the gratitude of the Canons of Arles and Montmajour by valuable gifts. The land given indirectly to the monks of Montmajour was situated near the Château of Balcis, from which Hugues, the son of Pons le Jeune, took the name that was henceforth to become famous in the South and to carry with it at different periods the titles of Prince of Orange, Count of Provence, King of Arles and Vienne, and Emperor of Constantinople. The prestige of the house received its first important impetus from the marriage of Raymond, the great-grandson of Pons le Jeune, with Etiennette, daughter of Guilbert, Count of Provence, on whose death there occurred a bitter struggle for his heritage between the Count of Barcelona and Raymond of Baux. The struggle dragged on until Raymond's death. The house then underwent a partial eclipse, and Hugues de Baux, a son of Raymond, exiled himself to Sardinia, where he founded a new branch of the family.

Raymond Berringer of Barcelona returned the property of the defeated lord to Bertrand of Baux, who became a Prince of Orange by marriage. Thereafter the lands of the house of Baux were augmented until at one time they included seventy-nine towns and castles ; but, as with so many noble families of that period, the extent of their overlordship was of a fluid nature, subject to feudal quarrels, to marriages, and to confiscations by powerful royalty. The race was extinguished with the life of Alix de Baux, and it is said that, as the Princess lay dying, a star appeared and hung over her until she

breathed her last. The light that had divinely guided the founder of the house to the cradle in Bethlehem now conducted the last of the race to eternity.

After dinner I wandered through the streets. How deserted, dead, ghostly the village seemed! Not a soul was abroad. The way ran through narrow streets, between dark walls, whence no sound issued save that of bats. I was alone, and it seemed that never had I been so much alone. Was there no one else in this lost quarter of the earth? If these dwellings had been in utter ruin the effect would not have been so melancholy, but they stood as if awaiting the return of their masters, whose absence they had never become wholly accustomed to.

There is something infinitely appealing in these ruins of the Middle Ages. In spite of a strange intimacy they have an air of remoteness and wonder denied even to monuments of greater antiquity. They are representative of an age actually more remote from us than is the age of the Romans. Between the first century and the twentieth there is an astounding degree of what the Americans would call contact: the Thames and the Seine are tributaries of the Tiber. But the Middle Ages are utterly alone, isolated from what followed and what went before. They are a Gothic edifice set between classic marble and modern stucco.

The entire site of Les Baux is covered with relics of its ancient power and prosperity. The ruins of the celebrated stronghold are situated on the highest part of the hill overlooking the plain and just below this are whole streets of noble houses once occupied by the citizens of Les Baux. The Grande Rue and the Rue des Fours are Park Lanes in better taste, although architecturally the exteriors must have been rather monotonous before they were given a diversity of ruin. A severe Renaissance style predominates and there is a dignified grace about

IN THE MIDDLE AGES LES BAUX WAS THE BRILLIANT CAPITAL OF ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL COUNTSHIPS IN PROVENCE AND THE RALLYING POINT OF THE TROUBADOURS. ALMOST ALL THAT REMAINS TODAY ARE THE RUINS OF THE OLD STRONGHOLD CROWNING THE HILL.

IN THE BEAUTIFUL CLOISTERS ADJOINING THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT TROPHIMUS AT ARLES THE STYLES OF THREE EPOCHS ARE MINGLED—THE ROMAN, THE ROMANESQUE AND THE GOTHIC.

windows and doorways in façades that open only to their own desolation. The sixteenth century seems as far as one may go in antiquity for these domestic mansions ; and with many of them the mortar could scarcely have knit their stones together before Richelieu, with his cannon, rendered them untenable.

From the existing ruins it is impossible to reconstruct the town as it appeared much earlier than the sixteenth century, but I do not think the medieval city could have revealed a more agreeable picture. Les Baux as it existed in the sixteenth century would have aroused in a visitor a sense of well-being and prosperity and of an ordered imagination, the result, one may conjecture, of a more ordered state of society than that which preceded it. Historians and travellers have made the very name of Les Baux sound fearsome, connecting it only with the alarms of war and love, as if no banner ever floated from its walls save the red one of strife, and no sound ever wakened its halls save the barbaric war-cry of the Balthes : *Au bazard, Balthazar !* In the midst of this they crowned a troubadour with peacocks' feathers and rolled the name of Blanche Fleur, or some other handsome judge of the Cours d'Amours, on their tongues, but only as an accessory to some tale of princely intrigue.

Neither the clash of the war-horse nor the love-lorn sighing of the vielle, for ever lorded it at Les Baux, and at least from the time of King René the citadel had its full share of peace and elegant gentility. It is of that period these ruined dwellings tell, and the peace in which they tell of it is no new thing to them. I fancy they do not hanker after the excitement of their predecessors, and in their desolation they are grateful for the solitude that now enwraps them. For their peace is assured until the rocks of Les Baux have crumbled to the dust of the plain.

But if I have given the impression that these Renaissance windows were never shuttered in panic, or these

Renaissance façades splashed with blood, I have wronged historic fact. A halt in front of a window on a lintel of which is carved this familiar device, Post Tenebras Lux, recalls a period of bitter religious struggle which arose from the introduction of Calvin's desolate cult to Les Baux in the sixteenth century. The building was at that time a Protestant temple, though here it is difficult to evoke the incongruous ghosts of praying elders. The Fathers of Geneva could never flourish in this soil, and God is still served in but one fane, the old church of St. Vincent. It is here that the elder Dumas' heart was wrung by the sight of a mother reading the service for the dead for her own baby, because there was no priest, and none to toll the bell save her little son.

Within the temple, as in many another of these houses, and especially the one that faces the hostelerie de la Reine Jeanne, is a beautiful Provençal fireplace. Nothing more poignantly speaks the desolation of Les Baux than these empty hearths, for their appearance is eloquent of their need, as if they cried out for crackling fire and the odour of game. In one of them an old beggar, lousy and twisted, lights a fire at nightfall to warm his monstrous body. That is all the use to which these mansions are put to-day. There has been no attempt to restore them, and the general aspect is one of dignified sadness.

Towards the summit of the hill, among the debris of the ancient castle, ruin becomes more ruinous, for these are relics of an earlier day. If we strike the red flag of war when among the Renaissance façades of the lower town, we break it amid the fallen splendour of the heights. The lords of Les Baux, with sanctified tradition behind them, built upon a rock and of the rock ; and perhaps that is why so much of their stronghold remains. But it is like a Moslem graveyard, with headstone leaning against headstone in utmost confusion. The shell of the old donjon rises in solitary vigil above the still

wreckage. It looks out across the plain as if hopeful that the star of Balthazar will rise again and touch the rocks that lie in petrified despair to renewed life.

A graceful stone arch frames the eastern view. In this direction the château looks out across a wide valley to the Basses Alpes, with vineyards and olive groves, cypresses, red-tiled farms and escarpments of the Alpilles in between. The cliff falls sheer from the castle and at its base there is a hint of the fantastic rocks on which I stood. In the valley, pale olive trees are ranged in orderly squares ; and from the midst of them, where a thin white road cuts out from left to right, rises a lonely farmhouse, red-roofed and backed by the dark green of cypress trees. Beyond this is the wave-like formation of a spur of the Alpilles, ashen and pink against darker and higher hills. To the right is stretched the silky, brown line of the Crau ; and then comes the end of the earth and the beginning of the sky, rising from a soft hyaline mist to the sapphire blue of heaven. In all this expanse there is rarely any sign of life save, perhaps, a black figure moving in the little farmyard of the red tiles.

The utter confusion of these ruins, which are like a dead forest of fallen trees, makes it almost impossible to rebuild in conjecture the ancient château of Les Baux. One understands the vagueness of Prosper Mérimée and his successors, who observe what all may observe—that the castle is largely built from the rock itself. This fact must have determined the form which it took, and have given it features uncommon to other châteaux of the period, but the general appearance of the building from the plain below would have been much the same as that of other great medieval strongholds. That it was of unusual size is fairly certain, and that it was grim and forbidding, like much of the temper of the age, is quite certain. No remains of unusual architectural adornment are anywhere visible, but there are traces of a donjon, a

Saracen tower, chapels, stables and a dovecot, while the wall can be followed almost in its entire course. For the rest it is simply an unintelligible mass of squared or twisted blocks, and scooped-out chambers like the cells of troglodytes.

Even in this weird conglomeration, the purpose of the acropolis and the humour of those who built upon it is strikingly expressed. If the name of Les Baux were unknown to you and the deeds of its contentious lords stranger to your thoughts, you would still, on first gazing at its wreckage, feel a chill of terror. It is as though the great castle had fought to the end, and in death had registered for ever on its features a bitter challenge to posterity.

At luncheon one day I was agreeably diverted by the arrival at the inn of a party of Provençals from St. Remy. They were market-gardeners whose industry had provided them with a tolerable fortune and an abundance of high spirits. Near to my own place on the terrace a long table was laid for them, so that I had good opportunity for observing them. It was simply a case of returning stare for stare in kindly curiosity. I had beside me a copy of *Mireille*, which apparently inspired in them the desire to impress me with their knowledge of Mistral's masterpiece. A young girl, pretty and of joyous disposition, recited with much spirit the second canto. Her voice was very beautiful, and so were her mischievous dark eyes; and when she had concluded she turned those dark eyes to me and declaimed with exquisite solemnity these words:

"A ting of buté iss a joy for evaire!"

At this we all laughed in hearty agreement, the girl laying her blushing cheek against the shoulder of her lover as if to hide the artless modesty which succeeded her effort. When lunch was over the old grandmother of the party

seated herself at the piano and played several old Provençal arias, some of which had been composed by the good King René. We then set to dancing, with a happy abandon which would have shocked those fashionable ballrooms which have returned to the stupid solemnity of a savage totem-dance.

We sang, we span round, we sat down exhausted and wiped the tears of laughter from our eyes, and altogether we behaved in a disreputable manner; though I felt absurdly romantic when I held in the dance the pretty girl who had recited 'Mireille.' To this day I hear her low accents:

"O Magali, me fas de ben
Mai, tre te veire
Ve lis estello, O Magali
Coume au pali."

Nevertheless, the *Patron* afterwards informed me that they were all very vulgar people, very common, the girl included. Bless them, so they were, the girl included; but as I think of them I find myself trying to remember the steps of the dance, and the words of the song composed by the good King René, and the shouts of joyous laughter, and the wicked message of brown eyes. Truly, however vulgar and common it may be,

"A ting of buté iss a joy for evaire."

I went down through the old gate to the *Pavillon de la Reine Jeanne*, which lies in a corner of a field in the valley. It is a small, Renaissance kiosk, with delicate columns and an exquisitely proportioned dome, just the sort of garden-seat that would look graceful and inviting in the mead of some quiet country house. It is asserted that there were originally four of these little pavilions, though I do not know why there should have been more than one. I only know that the remaining pavilion, with a dwarf-oak tree beside it, is full of beauty,

and reminiscent of a happy period in the annals of Les Baux. Travellers, rather wickedly mixing their dates—for the style of the architecture should have warned them—have associated this delicate jewel with the half-legendary Queen Joan of Naples and the courts of love she ruled over. They would be nearer the mark if they attributed it to Joan, wife of King René d'Anjou, who lived for some time at Les Baux and created his beloved spouse countess of its fief.

Perhaps René and Joan revived in some measure the old Courts of Love. The king was himself a troubadour, loving chivalry, gaiety, and the arts, as his mother Yolanda of Aragon had done before him, and doubtless this little garden at the foot of Les Baux often heard the gentle cadences of love which seem to have been a feature of the royal partnership; doubtless, too, the heady observances of the Cours d'Amour were not always confined to the royal couple. *Cy toy et moy*—'tis thee and me—was the ardent utterance of other lips than René's in this graceful spot. Still, one thinks chiefly of the beautiful Joan of Laval, who loved Les Baux almost as much as she did her barony of Beaufort; and of René, King of Jerusalem, of the two Sicilies, and lord of a host of other places. One thinks of them not only because of the idyllic life they pursued at Les Baux, but also because theirs was the true Golden Age in Provence.

It is easy to dwell on that period, here in the marble cool of the *Pavillon de la Reine Jeanne*. There is a hushed solemnity in the air. An eagle is poised against the luminous white sky. The grass in the garden softly undulates before a breeze and glistens smoothly where the sun strikes its low, green swell. There is the sound of cicada and the perfume of lavender and broom, and as I look out to the south, my eyes drawn thither by the opening of the valley to a wide plain, I see a team of horses moving slowly in the shadow of a cypress grove.

There is a murmur of bees in the tree close by, and there is almost a sound of low sweet singing in the air :

> " Regnault, vien environ
> De la souche ; et nous asseon.
> Cy toy et moy ! "

The voice that made havoc of a pilgrim's heart, and changed his aves to passionate kisses on the lips of a roguish minx, is not silent yet. I had better move on. Unlike the pilgrim, I shall have no time to soothe a broken heart and pray for my soul at our Lady of Larghet's shrine, high on the mountain.

The way out was along the valley to a break in the wall, which gave on the entrance to a little farmhouse set prettily against a grove of cypress-trees, and fenced by a low stone hedge. On the white walls brown streaks of lichen interlaced with the shadows of almond trees. A few paces from the front door, on a terrace in the shade of a pomegranate tree, sat an old lady. I was thirsty. The pomegranate tree was laden with crimson fruit. At the foot of the terrace a spring bubbled up and set off tinkling through the garden. What could I do but enter and seek to quench my thirst in this cool, fruitful arbour ?

As I entered the gate I felt as if I were about to break a spell. Had I the right to enter into this seclusion, this garden enclosed ? There came prompt answer in the indignant bark of a dog ; but in spite of the certain Begone ! of that bark, it gave me confidence. I was no intruder into realms of Faery, but a very ordinary way-worn traveller seeking hospitality from a fellow-creature.

The dog barked loud and long. He crouched low on his fore-paws and humped his bristling hindquarters. He tried to look as savage as his bark suggested, but all to no purpose. An optimistic curiosity gradually got

the better of him, and I could see by the cautious wag of his tail that it would soon overcome the loyal and conventional challenge. He looked me in the eyes and then turned to his mistress, who had shown no interest whatever; then, feeling assured that all was well, he wagged his tail the faster, his bark became at once an apology and a welcome, and as nearly as any dog could do it he introduced me to the statuesque old lady. This done he yawned, stretched, snapped carelessly at a passing bee, and with one eye closed lay down in the dust at the feet of his mistress.

The old lady now turned to me: "Bon jour, Monsieur."—"Bonjour, Madame, it is hot."—"Oui, it is hot."—"With your permission, Madame, I may take a bowl of water from the spring?"—"Mais oui, oui, but will you not have a pomegranate also?"

She plucked a delicious ripe fruit and handed it to me, directing me to sit on the ledge by her feet. I imagined she was accustomed to people sitting at her feet, figuratively at all events; and I sat there munching the cool fruit, making no conversation, for she had indicated none.

She was typical of old people in this land, and largely typical of all old people; but the finer characteristics of her type seemed in her to be accentuated. A proud dignity sat upon her in some archaic manner, as on old statues; and her eyes looked beyond the immediate scene, although they were clear tranquil eyes, like a Provençal summer sky in the hour before dark. Her complexion was a healthy pink, with a hint of brown. Not a glow, or a blush, but a changeless hue set there until the end. Life had little more to frighten her with. Those cheeks would never blanch again save in death; nor blush at a word of flattery or unseemly jest unloosed from the merry tongues of husbandmen amid the wine of harvest-home.

On her head she wore the pretty Arlesian cap, clean and newly starched. It sat like a coronet above abundant grey hair that was firmly drawn to a Grecian knot. A silver brooch, carved with a representation of the Three Maries in their heaven-guided craft, caught at the neck her close-fitting black bodice. Below this her dress spread out in soft folds. She looked like the pictures of Queen Victoria. On her lap was a basket of almonds, and her fingers moved with graceful and rapid ease as she removed their green cases.

She sat in a sweet garden from which vague perfume arose. For background she had the white wall of the cottage, with its little brown door and tiny windows. A pigeon plumed itself on the pink tiles of the roof, and sparrows fluttered in an almond-tree. A clean-washed bench stood by the door, and underneath it was an earthenware bowl at which a chicken stood straining its neck for drink ; though drink there was a-plenty, easily got at, in the little brook a yard or two away. Against the wall hung a huge wooden ladle, and a little further along were baskets all stained purple from the grapes they had held. Through the open door ran a vista of brownish twilight ending in cool depths of darkness beaded with pots and pans.

All this a background for the proud old lady, whose eyes were content, and whose fingers were busy with her almonds. As if he had been there for ever the little black dog stretched lazily at her feet ; and I, too, sat there as if it were my whole existence, to sit like this, calm and thoughtless, at her feet. I hope that I shall grow to my last years in soft warm peace and dignity, in a quiet country place ; and sit with the blue sky above me, the perfume of almonds and wine in my nostrils, and the power to give, without word or gesture, ease and comfort to those who sit at my feet.

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This must have been an admirable region for the early troglodytes, and it is surprising that there are so few relics of that period. The whole place is full of secluded ravines and commanding peaks, in which a tribe could live concealed if danger were near, or from which it could swoop down on a passing prey. It is easy to understand why the great Barbarian hosts moved on through the plain, without halting, except for isolated skirmish, to measure their strength with the legions of Rome encamped among the defiles. Except for the stele known as the Tremai there is precious little trace of that encampment; and there are even those who aver that the Tremai has nothing to do with Marius and his Romans.

It is a carving of three figures on a huge elliptical stone at the rear of Les Baux, and in front of it a modern chapel has been built, with crude frescoes illustrating the arrival of the Three Maries on the shores of Provence. Christian tradition makes the stele commemorative of that event, and although Les Saintes-Maries at the edge of the Camargue is now regarded as the scene of the landing, an earlier, forgotten tradition gave that honour to Les Baux. M. Gilles and Sir Theodore Cook laugh delightedly at this childish prattle. Is it not plain, they say, that the carving represents Marius, his wife Julia, and his Syrian prophetess, Martha? Well, it may be plain to Sir Theodore Cook and M. Gilles, but though I clambered to the roof of the chapel and scrutinized the figures for a long time, it is certainly not plain to me. But perhaps I was not convinced because I would not be.

A less contentious attribution is Mistral's *Grottes des Fées*, where Mireille sought to heal the wounds of her lover, and where, in strange subterranean halls and galleries, folk of the underworld engage in rather disreputable practices, all, it seems, to do with the guarding of

a golden goat and countless other treasures. When I set out in search of it—for it lies on the other side of the grotesque Val d'Enfer—I was so often diverted from my object that at length I found myself on the summit of the rocks. It had been a stiff climb, but not a difficult one. For half the way there is a mule path; for the rest you must pick your steps and be unmindful of a bruise, or a cut from brambles.

I passed quite a number of grottoes, one more lovely than the rest. There is an oval entrance of lichen-covered rock to a green flowery chamber open above, but screened by a young fir that spreads out from the summit. It is a grateful spot, and there are many such. One is like a huge granite throne curtained in green, open to the blue sky above and revealing an exquisite glimpse of the brown and white summit of Les Baux.

Having rested there, with the sound of running water in my ears, I clambered up to the summit, where I was rewarded with a marvellous view of this strange neighbourhood. It is said that Dante based his descriptions of the inferno on what he saw here. Doubtless he did nothing of the sort. His own Tuscany has many a scene fearsome enough to inspire his imagination. Nevertheless, this neighbourhood is assuredly Dantesque, Düreresque—a sort of Arabia Petraea. The rock on whose summit I stood is lifted from the centre of a basin, the rim of which has several pieces knocked out of it. On the eastern rim is Les Baux, its houses distinguished from the naked rock only by their red tiles. The spectral château walls rise above the town, but do not appear so commanding as from the hidden valley. From the edge of Les Baux there is a sheer drop to lower, sparsely covered hills, which give way to still rockier escarpments. Behind these, separated from an unseen valley, the rim of the basin is continued by a saw-toothed ridge, and that carries on the circle in a

series of thin high peaks interrupted at the Pass of Les Baux.

Within the circle is a twisted labyrinth of rock, without any common aim except to appear grotesque. Save for the hidden grottoes almost the whole of this scene is bare and denuded of vegetation, though close at hand there is low thick scrub, lively with bright-hued butterflies and the chirp of grasshoppers. A bird, whose note fits the weird character of its eyrie, keeps up a monotonous call to which comes no reply. Faintly from the Val d'Enfer is heard the bark of a dog, and fainter still is the sound of cow-bells ; except that, and the wind searching in and out of caverns, there is no sound at all.

Far away, as if they belong to another world, a village or two glisten out from the miragic Crau, and beyond this the Basses Alpes swell. I turned to see a silver streak, thin as a strand of grey hair, divided from the white horizon by a faint band of purple : it was the Rhone. To the west rose the peaks of Auvergne ; northwards lay Avignon, like an isolated wood at the base of Mont Ventoux. For the rest, the Alpilles hid the scene, and to ease my eyes of the strain imposed by this uneven wilderness of rock, I looked to the pale, unclouded sky.

Among the rocks of this natural citadel, and especially along the northern ridge of the Alpilles, which overlook the Aurelian Way, Marius must have had an important camp whilst awaiting the march of the Barbarians. He waited a long time for the awful hosts, and it is curious that he made no attack upon them as they crossed the Rhone, but allowed them to pass along the road to Aix almost without let or hindrance. It is suggested that his aim was to accustom his troops to the sight of the Barbarians, whom propagandists, imaginative then as they have proved in later years, had invested

with terrifying attributes. At all events, whatever his object in allowing the enemy to pass close enough to throw stones upon them, and to return their insults, his subsequent campaigns proved the wisdom of it, and Plutarch's account of the bloody battle near Aix, which leaves an echo of its horror in the name the field still bears, shows with what widsom that skill had been directed.

For the rest of the afternoon, which had an hour or two of daylight, I wandered aimlessly about this neighbourhood, losing myself from time to time among the extraordinary jumble of hills and goat-tracks. Occasionally an old ruin, like a lonely blockhouse, beckoned me up a steep, shrub-covered hillside, and gave me scratches for my pains. Several times I came upon deserted farms, where the trees were heavy with fruit, and like the little girl in the fairy tale I shook the branches to relieve them of their burden. No peasant, no dog was anywhere to be seen. Life stood still, listening to the wind in cypress or mulberry tree, and to the drone of the cicada. I felt deeply the beauty of it. The atmosphere was like that in an empty cathedral, when you kneel, infinitely dwarfed, with prayer in your heart but not on your lips, overcome by that instinctive force of devotional intensity which builds a God for every savage, and is not a matter of dogma or tradition.

I came upon a long road that I knew would lead me through the valley, which now drew down the shadows of expiring day. Presently I overtook a gypsy woman, making, she said, for Arles. Two youngsters, a boy and a girl, trotted on beside her, with bare feet and tousled heads; and the woman, who was little more than a girl, carried her worldly belongings on her back. She accepted my offer to relieve her of the burden for at least so far as I should be disposed to go in her

direction. And so we ambled along, all four of us, raising a little cloud of dust, and chattering as we went. The light was ebbing out of the valley and the sky was cool and silky, with a hint of rose where the sun lay concealed by the hills. As we approached the spot where my road lay northwards and the road of the gypsies lay south, the little boy came fumbling at my sleeve. His eager face looked up at me and he said: "Monsieur, for just five sous I will carry that bag for you!" The impudence of the offer was startling, and the woman, seeing my astonishment, woefully mistook its cause. "It is not heavy, Monsieur," she murmured, with an unenterprising smile, "and little Antoine is saving up to buy a bicycle." We had by now reached the parting of the ways, and I handed the bag to the shrewd young Antoine; but in righteous anger refused to give him five sous. With a sense of indignity increased by the silly smiles on their faces, I raised my hat in a manner intended to be haughty, and bade them good-day. But once around the corner I sat down and laughed. After all, it is diverting to be made a fool of in this manner; and at worst it leaves one with a sense of the wickedness of one's fellows: that is always a comforting reflection.

When I looked down the road I saw that the bag had been thrown in the dust and that the two children were quarrelling over who should take it. The mother walked on and left them to it as if it were no concern of hers, and even when the boy had stripped his sister of her only garment and stood whacking her naked back with a stick, she did not bother to look round at the cries. The last I saw of them was the mother, a dark speck in the distance; then the boy, without the bag, trudging after her; and finally the little girl standing naked in the centre of the road by the side of the bundle, and treading her gown into the dust in a fury. Soon her cries were hushed and her form lost to view, and

out of a dusky wood came the round clear notes of a nightingale.

The road from Les Baux to Arles traverses a fertile plain for almost the entire way. The first village is Fontvieille, a dusty little place behind which are three windmills, one of which is said to have been in Daudet's mind when he wrote his *Lettres de Mon Moulin*. Daudet stayed at the little château across the way and no doubt had many times visited one or other of the three mills established here, but the letters themselves were actually written in Paris. Fontvieille is occupied chiefly by people engaged in quarrying and carting the red stone of Les Baux, known as bauxite, and used in connection with the manufacture of aluminium. It has an hotel of sorts, distinctly of sorts, and a drab population, so that I was not at all sorry to take again the road to Arles. As far as Montmajour the road lies over rocky and more or less uncultivated plain. It passes between Fontvieille and Montmajour a farmhouse surrounded by artificial walls. Clambering up the rocky stairway I found what was apparently the relics of Saracen fortifications and a number of rock-hewn caverns, the particulars of which are of no importance. I believe the place to be called Château de Castellan. In olden days it might have been a little island rising up from the lagoons, like Montmajour, just the sort of place to which the Saracens could bring their plunder, mooring their ships to the precipitous side of the rock. In those days one would have looked from this little eminence upon a curious mingling of landscape and waterscape.

It would not have been a scene more populous than it is to-day, and would have been assuredly more desolate, arousing by this circumstance a feeling of melancholy, that sort of melancholy which is also dreadful when you know that the territory about you is a sort of no-man's

land, and that the morrow may find you a captive bound for the markets of Tunis or Algiers. The insecurity of his servants, that above all, was an unanswerable impeachment of the feudal lords. These lords could never be depended upon to give succour to those who succoured them, and so one's life must have been a perpetual anxiety, in the light of which we must pardon many of the Bacchanalian excesses to which the medieval people were periodically prone, during their moments of relief. It was a case of living while they might, for there were ten chances to one that to-morrow they would be dead, or worse.

There would have been wide stretches of water unevenly disposed across the plain, but with channels that ran uninterruptedly down to the sea. It may be that you would have seen a brown sail or two, and even a painted galley, and, rising from their silvery beds, would have been thick forests of pine, and grey, salty-looking shrubs. Overhead the birds of the air and the sea, wheeling, slowly; and higher still the hard, whitish-blue of the sky. From out of the wood on yonder little island the Abbey of Montmajour would have raised its stern Benedictine bulk, and on a road that wound among the lagoons there may have been a passing cavalcade, war-stained, and travel-stained: I know not; those were troublous times, and if we may believe the chroniclers of olden days and the romantic historians of these, one never looked upon anything but warfare, with its fugitives and corpse-bestrewn battlefields, its corsairs and galley-slaves, its clash and blare and waving of banners, the sullen retreat of defeated armies and the splendid processional of victors.

See what you will, but sooner or later you will come back to what it is—a grey and green monotony, exhausted by the heat save where the shade of a small copse refreshes it, sleepily tuneful with the buzz of insects, and

© *Ewing Galloway*

THE OLD CATHEDRAL AT ARLES, CONSECRATED IN 606 AND MANY TIMES REMODELLED, IS NAMED AFTER SAINT TROPHIMUS WHO INTRODUCED CHRISTIANITY INTO THIS ROMAN CITY IN THE **FIRST CENTURY.**

HERE IS A TYPICAL AUDIENCE AT A PROVENÇAL BULL FIGHT. THE VEHICLES WHICH BRING THE SPECTATORS SERVE ALSO AS GRAND-STANDS.

startled now and then to a fuller realization of its immense quietude by the shriek of a high-poised hawk. Mile upon mile of flat, uncultivated surface, grey from the stunted shrub that feeds on salt, but streaked with endless outcrops of jagged, glassy rock. A lonely hut, battened down and unoccupied; the still, quiet, lifeless array of Montmajour, whose donjon lords it over half the area; from east to west of it the thin dusty road; creaking drays passing with loads of dressed stone or the reddish bauxite used to make aluminium from.

In about five minutes from this little farmhouse you reach the great abbey of Montmajour. This was the oddest abbey I had ever come upon. Somehow it warmed my heart to see these massive buildings become a farmhouse, noisy with the squealing of pigs and the neighing of horses and the braying of asses and the clucking of fowls, and odorous with the smell of wet straw. The yard through which we passed was all a-litter. The place seemed full of hay: it burst from balconies and windows and cells like horsehair from the rents of a boarding-house sofa. A huge gap in one of the walls revealed a low vault which had been divided into pig-sties, and the braying of concealed asses frequently startled me. I should hate the good Benedictine monks who were called from these selfsame cubicles to see this desecration; but I confess to some pleasure in it myself; for I had expected something desolate, and instead of that I found a farmhouse.

But the desolation was to come; it is the actual church which has been preserved and has a guardian all to itself with huge keys and notices and a wooden leg. The church was never finished, and consists of a broad nave without aisles and with apsidal choir and transepts. Beneath the choir and transepts is the crypt, with an ambulatory and five chapels radiating fanwise from it. South-east of the church is a battlemented donjon built

in 1369. The beautiful cloister south of the church has been considerably restored, but is still a fine example of twelfth century work. It gives the lightness of simplicity rather than its heaviness ; the lean-to roof has preserved its original stone flags, and there are flowers and weeds as in an overgrown garden, while in the centre is an old-fashioned well-head. Behind it is a tall square battlemented donjon, firm as a rock, lifted there by Pons-de-L'Orme in 1369 for the greater security of God's holy servants.

They needed something of the sort. The sight of the Cross was sufficient to hold back the Saracen, who was a cruel foe. When the Archbishop of Arles lay besieged in his own Abbey of St. Cæsare, it took vast ransoms of gold and silks to buy off the impious invader. The people at length found the ransom which the infidels had demanded, and saw their archbishop, clad in all the splendour of sacerdotal robes, swung over a Saracen's ship side, and returned, amid derisive mockery, to those who had sold all and given all for their master's life. But it had been in vain. The splendid figure in the holy robes was handed back a corpse. In the light of these facts one recognises that the great square keep of Montmajour had its uses.

The Refectory on the south side and the eighteenth century conventual buildings are now used as a farm. Beneath the castle rock is the curious chapel of St. Pierre, a small rock-hewn structure with three rude chambers at its eastern end, one of which, according to tradition, is the Confessional of St. Trophime. A couple of hundred yards to the east is the curious Byzantine chapel of Ste. Croix, in the form of a great cross. It dates from the twelfth or early thirteenth century, and consists of four apses and a western porch. It is adjacent to a number of rock tombs that have occasioned much erudite conjecture, and the whole thing is an incongruous feature in

a group of architectural incongruity ; for here we have the early Christian chapel of St. Pierre, the heavy twelfth century church, the eastern curiosity of Ste. Croix, huge square-traced keep of the fourteenth century, and finally the Renaissance mansion on the hill.

All these buildings lie on what used to be known as the Ile de Montmajour. It was indeed an island when Childebert founded it in the tenth century. It was written of then as " Insula S. Petri quae nominatur a Monte Majori," and the Saracens could bring their ships to its very walls. Even in Mérimée's day it was surrounded by endless glistening lagoons ; and all the fertile plain that stretches to Arles in a succession of cornlands and vineyards was a muddy, salty waste. The existence in ancient days of these vast inland lagoons must always be borne in mind when visiting these places otherwise you are at a loss to explain a great deal of historic circumstance.

Leaving Montmajour it is a matter of about two and a half miles along the plain to Arles. As you approach the outskirts there is a fine view of the tower of St. Trophime, which appears to face directly on the road, like the superstructure of a barbican. Then you enter through an old gate to the proud city.

IX

ARLES

I HAVE come to Arles. It is full of peaceful ruin and strange quietude. I arrived in the evening, at the setting of the sun, and stood upon the great bridge which spans the Rhone. The river lay like a sheet of molten gold to tempt human avarice. Black streamers, like serpents, glided silently beneath the bridge, and a line of poplars rose on the far bank to form an impenetrable wall of purple. It glowed with a sinister fire, as if drawing life from the weakened day, and the sky immediately above it paled. Presently its pallor was succeeded by a haze of green and blue, which a golden whirlpool sucked into its vortex as it might have sucked the souls of men damned for their greed.

This whirlpool lay within a wide river that lapped the walls of a citadel of cloud, encircling them like a moat. From the towers flew rosy pennants high against the sky, and I fancied that at intervals I saw the gleaming silver of upraised trumpets, and heard the stirring call to arms. But if a struggle there were, I know not how the issue went, for it was taken out of the sky and over the western horizon. The whirlpool and the moat faded, the pennants were hid, the ramparts crumbled to a grey-gold dust, and the last I saw was of a great confusion in the west; and then peace, beneath a soft and silky sky, a sweet murmur in the cypress trees, and a gurgle by the bridge as the waters of the Rhone passed beneath it.

It had been an agreeable vision, which not even the

barren severity of my hotel could wholly banish, though indeed it was a miserable house in which to lodge myself, with rooms vast and draughty and dark, and a lounge like the reading-room of a public library. Better by far were the shabby cafés in the Place du Forum, where light, and some degree of jovial inconsequence, lifted from my heart the sense of impending doom which had been inspired by the hotel. There is another hotel adjoining it. I am not sure that it is better, but it very probably is. Henry James recalled these self-same houses with a tolerance that honoured him, but with a sense of baffled hurt that is amusing. The night had staled to the melancholy gloom of two street lamps in the square, and a litter of cigarette ends on the deserted pavements of the Place du Forum, when I passed to my sad chamber of rest.

The next morning I did my pious duty, purchased a set of tickets enabling me to visit all the ruins and antiquities, and wandered patiently, at twenty-five centimes a peep, from the arena to the theatre, the theatre to the cathedral, and thence to the Musée Lapidaire. What these things show, above all else, is the important part which Arles has played in the history of the world from the time of the Greek colonies. Under the Romans, as Arelate, it was one of the most significant centres on this side of the Alps, and became an important naval and commercial port connected by canal with the Golfe de Fos. We know, for example, that Julius Caesar had twelve vessels of war constructed and equipped at Arles during the siege of Marseilles. From the same source we learn that Arelate's industry and commerce were in a high state of development, and that weapons of a rare perfection were manufactured there. An example of the metal-work done at Arles is preserved in the Copenhagen museum.

Of their skill in architecture we have the evidence of

our own eyes. There is the amphitheatre, wonderfully preserved, of which so much has been said that there is little left for me to say ; and I advise those who wish to study this great structure closely to read Sir Theodore Cook's *In Old Provence*, which is more authoritative than I can ever hope to be. But I found great joy in wandering aimlessly among the tiers of worn seats, chasing green lizards. Whenever my thoughts are antiquarian they are accompanied by visions of green lizards : the breed haunts every ancient stone from El Djem to Athens and from Arles to Rome, so that in extravagant moments I can almost fancy them to be the souls of ancient Greece and Rome incarnate !

As for the Theatre, that is of a beauty incomparable, though of all its vastness, designed to hold sixteen thousand spectators, little remains except two fine columns and a section of the entablature. It has been sufficiently restored to make possible the presentation, in modern days, of classical and Provençal plays performed, as a rule, by members of the Comédie Française ; but that is a conceit, like the revival of peasant crafts among peasants who no longer think as such. The theatre was sadly mutilated by religious fanatics of the fifth century, and in 1664 a monastery was built on the actual site of the stage. Says my authority : " A terribly inharmonious thought is suggested by the fact that throughout the Middle Ages, and up to the Renaissance, the common name given to the sole surviving pair of columns was the ' Fourches de Rolland.' Modern poets have seen the shape of a lyre in their graceful lines ; but if we are to think that ' Fourches de Rolland ' means ' Fourches Patibulaires ' we must conclude that the ruin was used as a gibbet on which were hanged those malefactors who had been imprisoned in the ' Tour Dominante ' above the southern arches, or perhaps in the ' Tour de Rolland,' which is

the highest tower added to the Roman Amphitheatre. Such a conclusion, followed as it is by the settlement of a convent upon that desecrated stage, suggests that a spot once consecrated to the drama will never be without its innate possibilities of tragic, as of comic happenings."

It is pleasant to vary one's study of ancient stones by mixing among the people, and watching them at their normal habits. That is agreeable enough, here in Provence, and especially at Arles. The people cannot be very different to-day from what they have always been, and though I have stayed many times, and for lengthy periods, at Arles, I have never become properly accustomed to the fact that I was living among a people over whom two thousand years had passed with its modifying influence.

The Arlesian of to-day is possessed of the circumspection, the honesty, the courage and the quick wit, incisive and slightly malicious, of the Gauls; to the Romans he owes his cult of citizenship, his vigorous will and taste for knowledge, his ardent enthusiasm for games in the amphitheatre, and his inviolable hospitality. Gervais of Tilbury, a disinterested witness of the thirteenth-century, well describes the character of the Arlesians. Gervais was English by birth and in 1209 was made marshal of the realm of Arles by the Emperor Otho IV.

He lodged at Arles for a considerable period, and there wrote his book, *Otia Imperialia*, in which he draws a portrait of the Provençaux, of which a great deal applies particularly to the Arlesians. They are, he says, wise in council, endowed with initiative, and well suited for action provided it meets with their views. Although they only make use of light weapons they are warlike, and owe their naval victories to the prudence of their calculations. They are fond of good cheer, and spend more than they can afford to procure it.

Yet their courage enables them to bear famine, cold and heat; and, being strong and robust, intemperance has no dangers for them. It follows that they are a very impressionable people, independent, quick to anger, and vainglorious. On the whole, no people, Gervais concludes, are more capable of well doing under good leadership, or of going astray if left to themselves.

Christianity was introduced into this Roman city in the first century, by Saint Trophimus, said to have been a disciple of Saint Paul, and to have dedicated an oratory to the Virgin before her death. By him was established one of the most influential centres of the church in Gaul, and to him is the great Cathedral of Arles dedicated. It is, I think unquestionably, the most beautiful Romanesque church in Provence; and in saying this we must remember that Saint Gilles' is on the other side of the Rhone, in Languedoc. This Cathedral of Arles was founded in 606 on the ruins of the Roman Prætorium, and was thoroughly restored, not always with the best results, in 1860.

The great feature of St. Trophime's is its magnificent Western Porch. I wished for a ladder that I might climb among the hierarchy of heaven sculptured on this marvellous façade. It is an exquisite family group, weathered to a rich brown against the otherwise plain grey façade; and from the market-place in front you get the illusion of wood carvings. God the father, encircled by the emblems of the Evangelists, is represented on the tympanum; the Apostles are on the lintel below, benignly countenancing the conduct of the world in the market beneath them; and on the arch above are sculptured the busts of angels. A frieze, prolonging the lintel, shows the elect on the left and the damned on the right, and under this is another frieze in which is represented the Adoration, the Kings before Herod and the Massacre of the Innocents. You

see St. Trophime and St. Stephen among the larger figures of saints sculptured below.

The interior is uninspiring, a circumstance for which the restorers are in some degree responsible. The long nave is like a bare tunnel through a limestone rock, and gives the impression of being too lofty. There are no statues of consequence, but one or two good pictures deserve a glance. There is, for example, a very agreeable Adoration.

On the western wall of the south transept there is an interesting painting of the fifteenth century showing the Provincial Council of Arles. Several important ecclesiastical councils were held at Arles in the early centuries of the Christian era, and the conversion of the countryside from paganism was, for a long time, largely directed from this city. In view of that, one would expect the interior to represent much more completely the history of Christianity in Arles, but from all that is visible, the great Church of Saint Trophime might be a structure of very recent origin. All the efforts of its builders seem to have been devoted to that very remarkable façade, though some have been expended on the pretty cloister, with its charming twisted columns, reached by a staircase from the south transept.

Opposite to Saint Trophime is the Musée Lapidaire. I confess that these local museums usually fatigue me. I do not care for heads like those of battered pugilists, bundles of uncommunicative torsos, rows on rows of stone fragments as shapeless as a geologist's collection. But at this little museum there is much that is of positive value, aesthetic and scholastic. I stood a long while by the beautiful head of what, clearly, was a young patrician boy. A sweet expression of innocence lies softly in the upturned eyes, and in the set of the lips there is a hint of destined greatness. One appreciates the strength and beauty of this head by contrast with an

adjacent one, also of a boy, in which the cherubic face entirely lacks character or nobility, and was probably moulded without any model save that of tradition. Here, also, there is a head of Marcellus, who died young, and set the whole Roman empire weeping.

I pottered about the Musée Lapidaire longer than I had intended to. That was because it made a mockery of my prejudices against museums, and partly because I had the place to myself. What makes it more than usually agreeable is its local character, so that you feel a certain accord with the figures and relics it contains. You are admitted for the moment as a citizen of Arles though presently you pass on; and they accept you in their company with a gentle hospitality, and speed you on your journey with the quiet lore of scholars. Helpful, too, is the character of their meeting-place, which is the old church of St. Anne, divided into ten chapels, each one filled with sarcophagi, columns, stelae or figures—Jesus and the Apostles cheek by jowl with Venus and her votaries, and a kindly saint with his eye on the exquisite draperies of a dancing maenad; so gracefully she dances that I fear the apostles and cherubim and saints must often be diverted from their prayers, as who would not be?

The dusk had gathered when I left the Musée Lapidaire. There was a sweet quiet about the town as if it had wearied of the heat of the day, and now rested to feel the cool breath of evening on its cheek. Even the Rhone seemed to flow more quietly; and with a sense of peace I left its banks to follow a canal. Beneath the mauve sky the world lay hushed and half-asleep; here and there, by groups of poplars, and once on some logs by the canal, were lovers, who had chosen that twilight hour which is so dear to lovers. It is the hour when a boy and girl may sit in wordless communion, the wind blowing softly through their hair,

with a hint of vineyards and lavender in its breath. How solemnly they sit, hand in hand, without a care in the world, so filled they are with the joy of love, and so comforted by the sympathy of gathering night. Summer twilight has much to answer for.

Much indeed. As I entered the Arlesian Alyscamps there were strange whispers in the cypress trees. It was like walking on the field of Ardath. From the ruins of Saint Honorat, which lie at the end of the avenue, I almost fancied I could hear a solemn Kyrie Eleison, but it was probably a night bird, overwhelmed by the twilight like the lovers on the banks of the canal. Or perhaps I myself was thus overwhelmed, and thus deceived; for the dusk was very beautiful, almost sadly beautiful, and the air was faintly harmonious as if it bore the last notes of laughter from the now silent vineyards.

I sat upon one of the open sarcophagi, opposite a great tomb inscribed with the names of half a dozen brave citizens of Arles, who were consuls at the time of the great plague in 1720. All that is left of that horrible visitation is this tomb to its victims, who died that Arles might not perish utterly, and a shrine or two in gratitude to the saints for the deliverance of the people. The Blessed Virgin's weeping, and the cries of Saint Roche, must have dejected all heaven for many a month. Tens of thousands were stricken and died before the heart of Jehovah was softened. But faith continued steadfast to the end, even in the whirl of secular brooms and the great secular burnings in the market-place, and the shooting of secular arquebusiers, and the cleansing by secular authorities of the unspeakable dens in the arena. When all was over, and the breath of Arles and its countryside made sweet again, the weary consuls died, and shrines were raised to the blessed saints amid hallelujahs more fervent

than ever. And for the consuls, a tomb in the Alyscamps.

Now it was no longer dusk, but full night, starlit and clear. The inducement to reverie increased. The tombs no longer gaped wide from the desecration of science, but lay still and sleeping, with scarce a sound along the avenue save the rustle of a leaf. Not a ghost was abroad. I dare say the spirits of those who were buried here have no wish to return, for they must realise the unwisdom of that. It would be like a young man returning to the haunts of his childhood only to find everything changed, and every feature a mockery of his dreams. For although this guarded avenue is a sweet place, with a holiness no museum may rob it of, the old Champs Elysées is gone forever. If a coffin upstream were to be entrusted to the Rhone, the great river would know not where to leave it unless it still remembers the service it did in past days, when bodies were thus conveyed to the holy fields,

Ove Rodano Stagna
. . . Fanno i sepolcri tutto il loco raro.

After all, it is proper that we should not think too much of the dead: we have little enough time to think of the living. But here, on a warm night, with the wind in the cypress trees and the tombs of the dead in formal array, and with the influence of the past whispering to half-drugged senses, one may be pardoned a sentimental sigh for the shrunken Alyscamps, which Christ himself pointed out to Saint Trophime as holy ground; and, moreover, if you study closely this Alyscamps, you will observe an epitome of the history of Arles, the one Imperial city of Provence, an example of the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome.

Pleasant afternoons I spent along the river banks, engaged in conversation with the people there, or

idling an hour or two beneath a plane-tree, with some books I had procured from a fine little shop adjoining the hotel. *Roi de Camargue*, a work by Jean Aicard, captures the spirit of this country almost as skilfully as Mistral did. Also I read Mistral's autobiography, in which there are some very happy stories full of the patriarchal spirit of Provençal country life. An enthusiasm which is pardonably uncritical often ranks Mistral with the greatest poets of the world. Lamartine introduced him as another Homer. If he is not that, or anywhere near it, he may at least take his place among the best of the southern troubadours, and therefore among the sweetest singers of all time. The measure of his appeal in his own country would comfort and reward him; for there is scarcely a child in Provence who cannot recite some line of Mireille, and talk intelligently of its creator. I remember, long ago, when Arles raised its monument to the great poet of Provence, the fact was signalised in the *Echo de Paris* with a headline " Le Midi bouge " : there is something of a sneer in that headline. Perhaps the south was a long time in raising the monument, whereas Paris at the least provocation will raise a dozen. But in the Provençal heart Mistral has been secure from the first. In Paris, the monument is often the beginning and the end, and little more than a sop to convention.

X

DEAD PORTS OF THE GULF OF LYONS

THE little journey I am about to describe was accomplished on the back of an apocalyptic horse, and so it took many days. But not for a great deal would I have surrendered my beast for the fastest motor-car on record. Half the joy of these southern lands is their slow progression, and it is a wise man who journeys through them at a proportionate rate. It is almost true to say that every bend in the roads south of Avignon calls for a halt. Here is some vestige of Marius and his Roman legions, here of the Saracens, there you will come upon a Crusaders' camp, and there the lone, flower-grown cloisters of a convent.

Nor is this all. The scenery of these parts is utterly different from that which you will find west of Greece, and parts of it are more of the East than of the West. The hills are comparatively low; on the whole they are barren, grotesque ridges, with no vegetation upon them save flat-topped parasol-pines that hang dark and still against the sky; but they conceal verdant groves, like groves out of Arcady, and slope to vineyards, orchards, or precious little farms where pomegranates and cypress-trees grow. Nearer the sea there is a stretch of flat, salty plain with nothing on it save tamarisk and a stunted growth of herb which feeds the wild cattle of the Camargue.

I have hinted that these parts should be visited on horseback, or by similar slow means; but that is not

always practicable, and it is by no means necessary. A cyclist will find the roads and paths of Gard and Languedoc altogether to his liking, and the motorist will be equally fortunate. Taride maps are procurable which plainly indicate both roads and paths, and there is little fear of going wrong. Even the desolate Camargue has a good track through its white wastes, and there are miles of smooth surface where a car may go all out. Moreover, it is an hospitable region, and where there is no inn there is always a farmhouse that will receive a stranger with courtesy.

This sketch is headed ' The Dead Ports of the Gulf of Lyons,' and I shall therefore omit what lies between them and Arles, and shall commence with the little township of St. Gilles. There is a fair road from Arles to St. Gilles, and there is also a little train that will carry you there, dropping you at a station which I include among the deadly places of the world. If you have any business to transact there, you had better go resolved to be pestered by dust and flies, and to waste half a day. It is a lonely station. I had almost said an ambiguous station ; but perhaps it is the little town on the hill, in which the station seems to have but a perfunctory interest, that is ambiguous.

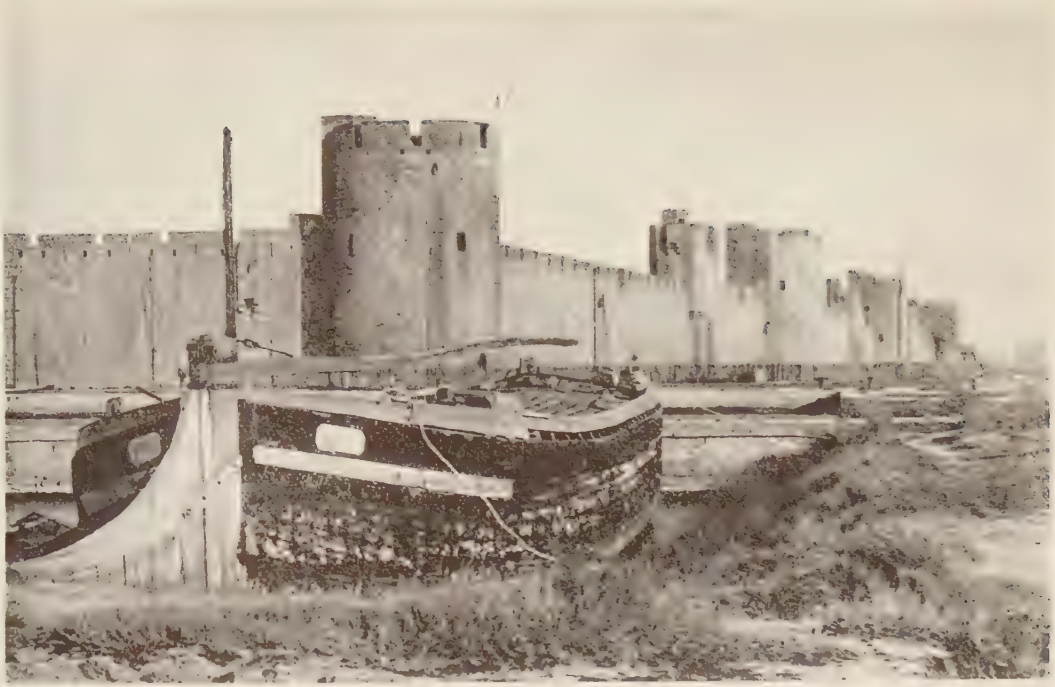
Both modern railway and ancient river (which once flowed under her walls but now is several miles away) deny the future of St. Gilles, and give but a scanty respect for its past. That past was not inconsiderable. Doubtless they are right who conjecture that St. Gilles stands upon the site of Heraclea, a Greek town of consequence as long ago as the fifth century B.C., when the colonies of Attica and Ionia had already made the South of France fruitful. In Pliny's day, Heraclea had disappeared. I do not care to suggest what sort of place it was in the time of the Greeks. For one thing, there is no certain evidence that St. Gilles really was the site of

Heraclea. All that is definite is that there were three Greek towns on the left bank of the Rhone—Agde, which lay farther south, Rhodes, which is possibly Beaucaire, and Heraclea, which is possibly St. Gilles.

We know where we are when we come to the Middle Ages, when our site is chosen as the seat of an abbey which came to be one of the most important in the south. This is the story of its foundation: St. Gilles was a Greek of Royal birth, and a very remarkable Greek. As a boy he miraculously cleansed a beggar of some hideous disease merely by throwing his cloak upon him; and thereafter his life was made impossible by the importunities of a worshipping people. To escape them he fled to what he considered to be an impenetrable hiding place, and was there sustained by the milk of a white doe.

Now at this time Wamba, who was king of the Visigoths, was in residence at Montpellier, and it being reported that a wonderful white doe had been tracked to its hiding place, he set out with his retinue to chase her. Sure enough the white doe appeared, and Wamba launched an arrow. The arrow, however, pierced the hand of the saintly hermit, to whom the doe had flown for protection. Wamba, coming to the hermit, heard the story of the animal's devotion and was profoundly touched. Here was no ordinary saintliness; and Wamba there and then decided to build a great monastery. After much persuasion the hermit agreed to be its abbot. He filled his office well, and till the day of his death there came princes, kings and beggars as suppliants for his blessings.

It matters little that Florenz, who was king of Provence, Wamba of the Visigoths, Charles Martel and his grandson Charlemagne, are each in turn credited with having founded the abbey and created the abbot. Sufficient that it was founded, and that the day came presently when the site had risen once more to the splendour it had



THE WALLS OF AIGUES MORTES, BUILT BY PHILIP THE BOLD IN 1272 FORM A PARALLELOGRAM INTERRUPTED BY FOURTEEN MARVELOUSLY PRESERVED TOWERS.

THE ENTIRE HIERARCHY OF HEAVEN ADORNS THE MAGNIFICENT PORTALS OF THE ABBEY CHURCH OF ST. GILLES. THOUGH IT HAS BEEN MUTILATED, THIS REMAINS THE FINEST GOTHIC FAÇADE IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE.

known in its heyday. Then, of course, the nervous channels of the Rhone came up to its walls, serving also the great abbeys of Franquevaux and Psalmody. Lagoons existed all the way to the sea, and before Saint Louis created Aigues-Mortes into a great harbour St. Gilles was the port whence convoys and pilgrims embarked for the Holy Land.

I went up to the roof of the Gothic Hôtel de Ville—a pleasant, graceful building, probably a little homesick in a region unaccustomed to its style—and gazed out across the fields of St. Gilles. It was difficult to believe that vessels had ever anchored in this dusty neighbourhood. Far, in every direction, stretched the grey vineyards. Here and there a clump of umbrella-pines showed black against the neutral tints of earth or sky, and as I looked to the south there was revealed a flat, pearl-coloured plain, with steely streaks to mark all that is left of the great lagoons. Black-winged birds wheeled silently over it, but never the wing of a ship. It was a scene of desolation, of curious, fascinating desolation, the effect of which was heightened by the knowledge that still more dead ports lay shimmering there, no sea within miles of them, no ship within leagues.

St. Gilles is not a prepossessing town at first glance. You look in vain for the shady, plane-tree avenues of the towns on the banks of the Rhone ; and equally in vain for those pleasant, easy-going cafés, with their sprawling chairs and tables set beneath green foliage, that you get into the habit of frequenting just about twilight. That is why it is not a good town at which to make a prolonged halt. A further and sufficient reason is the primitive character of its inn, which has no virtue save that it enables you to study some curious specimens of the French race at too close quarters. But if you come about the time of vintage you will find St. Gilles to be gay and heartening enough ; for then its streets, when

the day is ended, are thronged with the jolliest crowd of *vendangeurs* from Italy and Spain, who come hither to turn an honest penny among the vines. St. Gilles is interesting also early in March, when it become a camping ground for the seemingly endless stream of gypsy-pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Black Sarah at Les Saintes-Maries.

Not the Catalans, however, nor the Gypsies, but the ancient Abbey, is the indispensable feature of St. Gilles. You will not find another such from the Pyrenees to the Maritime Alps unless it be St. Trophime, at Arles, and that, although better preserved, is not so exuberantly beautiful as the Abbey of St. Gilles. It is the more beautiful perhaps by reason of its mutilation. I saw within the church a sightless child praying to a wooden image of the Virgin, and her face had a strange, sweet radiance in spite of her blindness; there is a strange, sweet radiance, like that of the blind girl's face, on the façade of the Abbey of St. Gilles.

It must have been a very noble abbey in its day, and anyone with a taste for that sort of thing could potter through the site for days on end, discovering at every turn fresh traces of magnificence. For the church to-day, large and imposing though it is, is but a fragment of the ancient structure. The choir is a litter of marble fragments and tombs, the tower is dwarfed to a mere vestige of its former splendour, and the exquisite *Vis de Saint Gilles* is a delicate, isolated stairway winding from wreckage into air.

The western façade is, however, still a thing of beauty, though "The Children of the Desert" did their best to destroy it during the religious riots of the seventeenth century. There is, as I have said, nothing to compare with it in the South. A noble arched doorway in the centre is flanked on each side by one rather smaller, and the whole face, from the southern to the northern door,

is a mass of intricate carving. The entire hierarchy of Heaven is there, disfigured it is true, but disposed in such wonderful profusion, and individually still possessing so much strength and beauty, that from a short distance the entire group is charged with an amazing life and vigour. The rich effect is enhanced by the existence of white columns, delicately, joyously carved at capital and base; and by the receding lintels of the arched doors. The original doors were of cypress wood given by the Pope to St. Gilles during the latter's visit to Rome. The Saint threw the doors into the Tiber, commanding the waters to carry their charge to his church. Sure enough, on the day of St. Gilles' arrival at the abbey the doors were cast up on the banks of the river, in perfect preservation. I should like to describe these carvings, but that would be to retell the scriptures, and this is no place for that. The best description which I know of is that provided by Monsieur Augustin Flèche in his excellent little monograph *Aigues-Mortes et Saint Gilles*, published by Laurens, 6 Rue de Tournon, Paris.

Although I divided my time chiefly between the western façade and the ruins of the choir, at the rear of the church, I realize that I should have given more of my time to the crypt, which, in truth, is but another church, following almost exactly the plan of the church above it. It was built in the eleventh century to take the tomb of St. Gilles, and its high altar was consecrated by the Pope himself in 1095. During the Protestant occupation of the church the Saint's tomb was rifled of its precious charge and filled with rubbish. The crypt is very noble and gloomy. It is good to get back to the saintly riot on the façade.

Outside, in the town, there is only an occasional vestige of any former splendour, and the general aspect in summer is of decay and dust. It is at autumn, when the pageantry of vintage-time cheers the unshaded

streets, that St. Gilles recaptures something of the ancient spirit. Then one feels a breath of the time when Pisan vessels, according to the chronicles of Muratori, could enter with their boats by the mouths of the Chèvre and arrive safe and sound at the stranger's quarters of St. Gilles. Many Pisan vessels were anchored off the walls of this town on the day of the Calends of September, 1166, when a great fair was in progress and St. Gilles had become the resort of innumerable people.

Of that period there is nothing at St. Gilles except the abbey ; but a number of sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century façades may be observed in old houses and at the end of the street, a few yards up from the church, there is a very grave, dignified little Romanesque house which tradition makes the birthplace of Clement IV. There are three floors, the upper two being joined by a massive lintel, and gracefully ornamented above the windows. Three elegant doors give access to the modernized interior, and the complete effect, from the steps, which are of stone, and extend the whole length of the building, to the projecting roof, is of a gracious severity. I should like to get a modern architect to build me a house like that. It would not excite much curiosity. There is nothing monumental, or 'old-world' about it. It is simply grave and beautiful, with that inconspicuous air which used to be a mark of good breeding.

II

From St. Gilles it is an hour's journey by rail to my next dead port—the walled town of Aigues-Mortes. You may, if you wish, go to Nîmes instead, but I doubt if it would please you better unless your mind is steeped in classicism, and you will not find a pleasanter inn than

the Hôtel Saint Louis at Aigues-Mortes. I do not know who is responsible for the establishment and upkeeping of this house, but I thank them from the bottom of my heart. By its comfort and hospitality it induced me to extend my visit and to discover for myself a region which I include among the strangest and most fascinating in Europe.

You get a hint of that region in the prospect from the tower of St. Gilles' Town Hall, and you enter it almost as soon as the train sets off to Aigues-Mortes. But it is better to go by road. The wide plain is like a desert, conveniently diversified by pleasant oases, where tiny villages sleep in the shade; and rendered ostentatiously artistic by clumps of umbrella-pines and little groves of cypress trees. Their dark colour and sharp-cut outline, in bold relief against the paleness of earth and the flat blue of the sky, provide an effect of unreality. There is something self-conscious and precocious about these landscapes. You admire them for their audacity and are repelled by what is outrageous and indefinable.

The walls of Aigues-Mortes are the essential and obvious feature of the town. Nothing else really matters (except the Hôtel Saint Louis!). Rising, as they do, from flat plain and flatter waters, they are seen for miles. A dark, grim belt of stone, with the great Tower of Constance rising at their northern end, firm and resolute. In general effect they are the most striking mediæval fortifications to be found in Europe, although I doubt not that a great part of the effect is derived from the appearance of the surrounding lagoons with their far, white horizons and their spectacular emptiness.

There is scarcely a stone dislodged; scarcely a sign of decay. Every tower is in a state of almost perfect preservation. In that respect they are superior to the walls of Carcassonne, and, I gather, have a greater air of authenticity; but they are only of the second order of

fortifications and therefore not so complete. To one who is uninstructed in such matters they seem more effective, and I cannot, on my life, understand how any other means than treachery could ever have given them into the hands of an invader. And that is the story of Aigues-Mortes. In an honest struggle it could hold its own ; but against treachery it was powerless.

Against Time, too, it seems able to hold its own, and as you pass through the great portal that admits to the town you are conscious of the strange influence these walls continue to exert. As you mount to the parapet and follow it from tower to tower the influence grows alarmingly, out of the stones and the stillness, out of the ashen waters that are its so fitting companion, out of the dead town it grasps, out of the hyaline blueness of the sky, where a group of migrating waterfowl, in echelon formation, are like something reflected in a mirror. The great walls dominate the entire scene. Little wonder that the town of Aigues-Mortes seems to gasp for breath ; that its extremities are already shrunken and crushed ; that the blood of life goes little farther than its heart, and even there goes slowly and painfully. The fact is, no excuse remains for the existence of Aigues-Mortes.

If Louis had been able to embark his crusaders from any other port along this coast, Aigues-Mortes would never have been anything more than a pestiferous village. But it happened that the saintly king had no friends between Cette and Toulon except the Abbot of Psalmody, whose territory included the village of Aigues-Mortes. He therefore treated with the monastery and secured complete rights over their little port. A strong tower, now called the Tower of Constance was erected, a channel connecting the lagoons with the sea was deepened, and plans were set afoot for the building of the walls. Thus Aigues-Mortes became the Woolwich

and Chatham of the Crusades, bustling with all the picturesque circumstance of chivalry, and dominated by one of the most lovable personalities in history, that Louis whose influence even to-day dominates the minds of every good citizen of Aigues-Mortes, and reflects his features in a worthy bronze statue that rises from the centre of the town.

It is a mistaken idea, prevalent among travellers and writers, that the walls were built by St. Louis. Not a stone was laid upon another when St. Louis died at Tunis, and the task was left to his successor, Philip le Bel, who entrusted the work to a Genevese contractor. The plan followed is one of obvious simplicity, and is said to have been inspired by a fortress of the Holy Land, possibly Antioch or Damietta. A similar plan was followed in the contemporary walls of Winchester. They form a parallelogram, interrupted by fourteen marvellously-preserved towers, which strengthen the curtains on the flanks and in the angles, and some of which are so placed that the parapet walk either goes through them or is conducted round the exterior of the tower's inner face. Some of the towers are round ; others are square, and directly pierced by gateways.

One of the towers is known as that of the Burgundians, and derives its name from one of history's minor tragedies. Aigues-Mortes was one of the last of the towns of Languedoc to remain faithful to Charles VI during the Burgundian troubles. It fell, however, to the enemies of the king in 1420, and its recapture was entrusted by the Dauphin to the Seneschal of Beaucaire, Guillaume de Neuillau. A night attack was agreed upon early in January 1421, and under cover of great secrecy Baron de Vauverbe moved to within striking distance of the walls. Meanwhile a number of royalists, aided by the wintry darkness, secured entrance to the town, and killed the sentries with utmost quiet and despatch.

The Burgundians were blissfully ignorant of the assault, and falling asleep in the tower which now bears their name, entrusted Aigues-Mortes to a few dead sentries and those saints of heaven who happened—ineffectually it proved—to be on their side. The attackers moved stealthily in the darkness. You can imagine their hearts beating, lest they should run into a trap; for these walls on a wintry night inspire forebodings. The parapet seemed deserted. Not a sound could be heard. Presently the Burgundians' tower was reached. Still nothing. It was entered as peacefully as you may enter now, and the whole garrison was found to be fast asleep. A very brief awakening was theirs! Never had the attackers enjoyed an easier hour of slaughter, and when their task was done, a great pile of Burgundians lay heaped in the tower. It is said that the dead were so many that Vauverbe decided to leave them where they were, and, in order to avoid stench and plague, the bodies were covered with a huge quantity of salt. And so they remained for how long I do not know, but it is a precious memory for the walls of Aigues-Mortes to cherish. I swear that the Tour des Bourguignons seems like a leer on the face of the walls of Aigues-Mortes.

Doubtless the tower of Constance, which rises stern and forbidding within the walls, though isolated from them, hugs to its breast memories even more fearful. Its interior arrangement, wonderfully preserved, is highly interesting architecturally, with beautiful groined vaulting, finely carved capitals from which Gothic arches spring to meet medallions delicate or grotesque; and beautiful old fireplaces that seem eloquent of their purpose, as if they cried out for sizzling game, or for the roistering of garrisons seeking their warmth on long winter evenings.

It was fitting that a little Huguenot maid should guide

me up the coiled staircase to the rooms in which so many of her faith had been imprisoned. She led me as if it were to our own imprisonment we marched ; as if like that we had climbed and descended, year in and year out, with the bright day concealed, glowing softly and unseen against the stone of our impenetrable prison. Presently we came to a wide chamber. In the grey wall that faced us was a narrow slit through which the day could be seen, like a bar of radiance. The little Huguenot pointed out to me the names and devices that had been carved on the wall by their sad prisoners, some of whom grew from childhood to old age in these grey chambers.

Those who were thrust in this tower were probably not so many as legend and the little maid of Aigues-Mortes would have us believe, and the captors were probably not the monsters described to us by fiery Protestant writers ; but it is certain that the wars of religion, and the measures taken to stamp out the heresy, were very terrible. It is equally certain that if you stand in these dark rooms, in which were flung men, women and children whom the bayonet had not killed or the rack converted, you will forget the wrongs done by *the Camisards*, or Children of God, in consideration of their sufferings. It is a privilege we have to pour out sympathy for those who suffered long ago.

In 1767 the Prince de Beauvan arrived at Aigues-Mortes to release the prisoners. This is an account of what happened, written by de Boufflers, who accompanied the prince on his mission of mercy. " We found at the entry of the tower an eager guardian, who led us through a dark and twisting passage, and opened a great clanging door on which Dante's line might well have been inscribed : *Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate.* I have no colours in which to paint the terrors of the picture which gradually grew upon our unaccustomed eyes. The scene was hideous yet pathetic, and interest

in its victims struggled with disgust at their condition. Almost without air and light fourteen women languished in misery and tears within that stone-walled chamber. As the commandant, who was visibly touched, entered the apartment, they all fell down together at his feet. I can still see them, bathed in tears, struggling to speak, unable at first to do anything but sob. Encouraged by our evident sympathy they all began to tell us their sorrows at once. Alas, the crime for which they were then suffering was the fact that they had been brought up in the same religion as Henri Quatre. The youngest of them was fifty and she had been here since she was eight years old. In a loud voice that shook with emotion the marshal said, 'You are free!' and I was proud to be his servant at that moment."

One is grateful, marching from chamber to chamber, for the platform on the summit. A restored crenellated parapet encircles it, and I leaned against this, looking out across the vast plain and lagoons as many a prisoner had done with sadder eyes than mine. It is a white, shimmering expanse, like enough to a mirage. On the far banks of the lagoons were pyramids of salt, and on the other side, between Arles and Aigues-Mortes, could be seen the towers and brown roofs of villages among their cypresses and plane trees. Through the flat waste of the Camargue stretched the Beaucaire Canal, with not a barge or a sail upon it; and the spaces of earth between the stagnant lagoons were given over to the vine.

When the dusk came I passed out of the town gates and wandered along a road which follows the canal. I had a vague notion that I might see the Tour de Carbonnière along that route, but three or four kilometres' walk failed to disclose it. That mattered little. It was the sort of sweet, melancholy dusk in which one would go on walking forever, as in a dream. Like a dream was all the land and the sky about me. The world was

tired out. Behind a distant rampart of pines the faded banners of the sun were being lowered; in the west were the towers of Aigues-Mortes, like columns of smoke, and between were crested farms and kiosks. In the first one or two kilometres of my walk there were the sound and vision of life, created by the returning vendangeurs, buxom, red-cheeked girls, and dark youths, joking with one another. I felt a desire to be among them, to follow along with them to Aigues-Mortes, and crack the jokes they like; to share their soup and their sharp heady wine, and to hear what they thought of life. I suppose they think very little of life. Their day is long, and there are acres of vines to pluck, and any spare minute there is is time for a drink and a jest. They can work and laugh at the same time, and they want nothing better. Then when the evening comes they eat frugally and drink liberally, and some go off to pray before their favourite saint, and some make love, and some dream dreams of Catalonia; and so to sleep, which is an easy guest with hearts so primitive. Why think of life?

They pass quickly, so that presently there is no sound. But all have not left the fields. The old men and women are slower than those who have passed. Now they come in groups of twos and threes, with nothing to say, to where the line of walls is visible. They have said all there is to say, over and over again, and so long ago now that some of them do not so much as remember having said it. They bend to the road like old monks studying their paternosters, and pass on, silently. Even they, the old ones, do not think of life. They have forgotten it, and life has forgotten them.

This scene, with the sun in its decline behind a fence of black trees, is sweet and restful, like the worn, dark peasants who march so slowly and mechanically homeward. They remind me of a tolling bell. A pale,

marshy plain stretches away on each side of the road and is diversified by an occasional umbrella-tree and groups of poplars. There are vineyards here and there, now altogether empty of peasants ; and the tender noise of insects. The canal is like a long white scar, and in the distance an outspread sail seen against the glassy sky is like a moth on a window.

I like the way night comes in these places. I like the way it comes on any plain, but more especially on a marshy plain like this. It is different in the hills. That oppresses me. In the hills night comes up from the valleys, on the plains it comes down from heaven, silky and dreamily. Here there are birds, even in the dusk, and they chant softly as if they were well pleased ; and the peasants do not light their cottages until late, but come out on their step to watch the night fall ; and a rider on the distant horizon is seen cantering slowly, for there is plenty of time and the cool air is sweet. There is no need to call the children in from their play until the soup is ready, and no need to hurry if, like me, you are four dusty kilometres away from your village. We of the plain have no mind to lift up our eyes to the hills when the night comes.

On a cool evening, after a day spent in visiting the old château where the governor of the town used to live, and the few unintelligible ruins of the monastery of Psalmodie, I resolved to run out to *Le Grau du Roi*, and accordingly borrowed a bicycle for that purpose. The path thither is set between the edge of the Beaucaire Canal and the edge of the lagoons, and if you are a little uncertain on your bicycle, you feel the proximity too close.

Le Grau du Roi is a lively village though it consists of barely more than a single street, and that the canal itself, which here debouches into the sea, being conducted

thence through two long, stone walls. On each side there is pavement, and more than enough bright shops, cafés, and inns. The canal itself, which is usually full of fishing craft, has an aspect of the Devonian coombe. As a bathing resort it is achieving a welcome popularity, and sure enough its sands are good and its sea warm.

Le Grau, and the expanse of lagoons which spreads on to Aigues-Mortes, look very picturesque at sunset. In the foreground are fishermen mending their nets on the quayside, and the slow swaying masts and ropes of fisher-boats. Farther along stretch the wide lagoons, patches of which are dazzling with salt while others are brown with little rush-covered islands. It spreads far away, water, salt, reeds and islands, to a dark line of umbrella-pines suspended over the pink and slate-coloured horizon. In front, the line of the canal narrows to a thin, white thread and then loses itself in the vast sea that clings to the southern walls of Aigues-Mortes. The walls themselves are but a brown, indistinguishable line, with the Tower of Constance rising at their western end.

III.

There are two ways of crossing the Camargue from Aigues-Mortes to Les Saintes-Maries. One is on horseback and the other is by getting a lift in a ramshackle car which on certain days runs out to Les Saintes for fish. Instead of going by horseback I awaited an opportunity of going with the fisherman. One takes a considerable risk in attempting to ride alone across the Camargue unless one is accustomed to the tracks, which, so hard is the surface of the ground, are very lightly marked. They are also bewilderingly mixed up, like the scribblings of a child on a slate. Therefore the risk of losing one's self is great; and to lose one's

self in the Camargue is a desolate adventure with nothing at all to commend it. There is none of the glamour which surrounds all well-advertised deserts, like the Sahara ; and if you should happen to die, leaving your bones scattered on its parched and melancholy surface, to bleach in the traditional fashion of romance, there is not the remotest chance of their being found in some picturesque circumstance by any hero or heroine generous enough to give them a decent burial in the pages of a stirring, desert novel. No: there they will lie, perhaps for ever, gradually overcome by the encroaching silt of the delta, until they have mingled with the hard, salty earth of the Camargue ; at best, some wild *gardien*, tending his sullen herds, will stoop to look at them, and seek to recall what he can of those who have been lost in the wastes of the Camargue. So I think you will readily agree that there is nothing in it, and that to endure a ramshackle car is the better and the nobler part.

For the first few miles, as far as the stream which they call the Petit Rhône, and for a kilometre or two after that, the way ran between vineyards. Labour was evidently scarce, for there were acres of vines with the dust-laden fruit almost bursting in anxiety to be plucked. But in other fields the brilliantly-kerchiefed heads of peasants bobbed up and down among the vines and baskets like swarms of butterflies. They called out and waved to us as we passed, and their incessant chatter and laughter could be heard until the region of cultivation was passed, and the salt-crusted, glistening Camargue lay before us, exuding an almost glassy mist of heat.

Presently there were scarcely more than half a dozen trees to be seen, and these were pale semblances of trees, which drooped their heads like captive prisoners. But the white glare of the plain was in patches sweetly softened by a kind of delicate heather, like a heliotrope

mist floating unsubstantially over the mirror-bright surface. Now and then there were other patches, aflame with the most brilliant broom I have ever seen ; but as our way continued even the broom disappeared and there was only the faint mist of heliotrope and mile upon mile of stunted, dusty shrub hugging the white and grey earth.

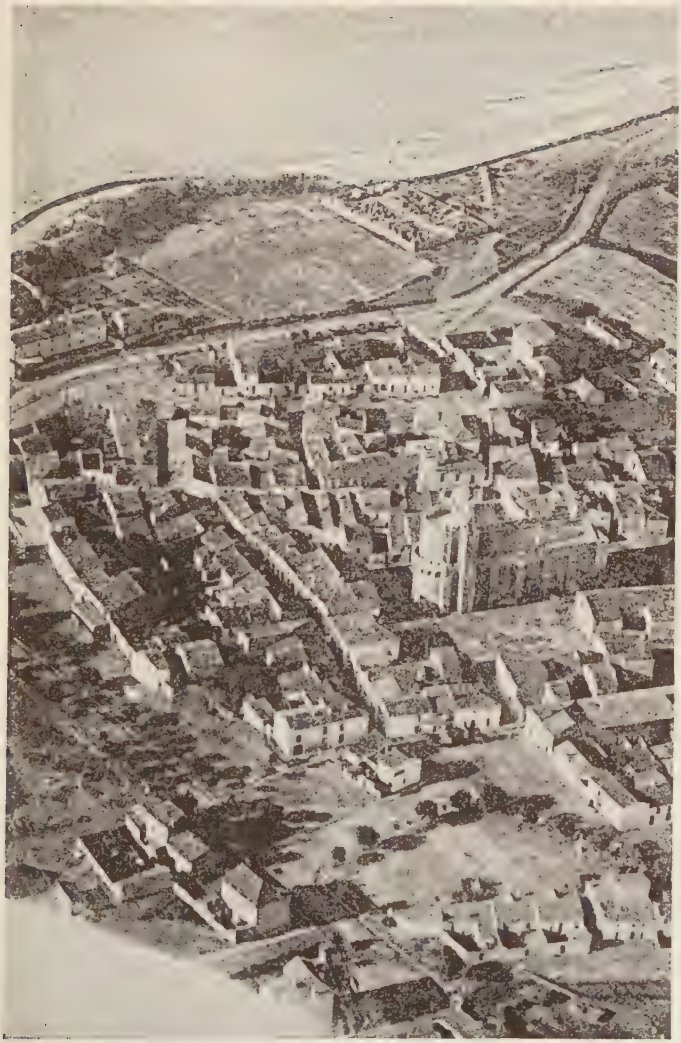
After a couple of hours' travelling we turned off the main track and continued for an hour over what seemed to be no track at all until we reached an isolated Mas, or large farm, which evidently concerned itself in the herds of cattle that live on the sparse feed of the Camargue. It was a white, angular structure like a huge barn, and there was no outward sign of its occupation ; but as we drove up through a fenced paddock two lean, harmless-looking men appeared, and with them a young girl who seemed to have found this bare, lonely wilderness sufficiently fattening. The signal was given that visitors had arrived, and at once there was a respectful parade of all the inhabitants. First came the two lean men and the fat girl, then a serried file of geese quacking an embarrassing welcome. At the distance demanded by farmyard etiquette stood a number of hens, looking up to a self-conscious cock as if awaiting their cue. Half a dozen cadaverous dogs barked out of unison and were shamefully playful with the chickens. A couple of old sows sauntered round to see what was doing, and grunted their indifference, while a window in the house opened and a kindly-looking matron waved at us with one hand and shook an unspeakable garment with the other.

It was difficult at first to detect what purpose this curious farm, or blockhouse, served ; but one of the purposes was made clear when I was admitted through the door to drink a glass of wine of a quality which, on any other occasion, would have been villainous, but on this was agreeable enough. The walls of the room were

hung with rabbit-skins, and in the corner was a pile of dead rabbits.

A number of rabbits were taken on board, and amid a general chorus of acclamation from all but the disgruntled sows, we moved off again into the waste, until presently the white *mas* was like a Moorish tomb. Often under our wheels we crushed a lizard, once, on the horizon, we saw a herd of cattle, and once were startled by the sudden flight of ravens. Once a pair of flamingoes rose out of the tamarisk shrub, but they were all the flamingoes I have seen on the Camargue and I am told that these birds are rare now, and that only in such a journey as I have taken, through the heart of this region, will you ever see them; otherwise there were no birds in all the white, shimmering heavens. Presently even the shrubs were thinned to mere lines on the hard, white surface of the plain. Then a few pine trees appeared and away on the left something glistened with a greater intensity than the plain had so far accustomed me to. It proved to be the sea, and a sign that we were approaching the end of our journey. Out of the horizon, like something unreal, rose the gaunt, fortress-church of Les Saintes-Maries, the focus of the strangest pilgrimage in all the world. Like some ancient, uncouth tower raised to a faith ancient and uncouth like itself, it seemed to bar the way to what lay beyond it. But as we drew nearer it assumed a less fearsome aspect. I knew at once that I should like this church, this warrior with a soul, this saint with a cutlass.

Maurice Barrès has called this the saddest village in the world. Well, I can take him to sadder ones; and I think a good deal depends on how you look at Les Saintes-Maries, whether you look with the eye of faith, at pilgrimage time, or with the eye of weariness, weariness from the heat and the dust and the sinister, unwholesome solemnity of the Camargue. Then it is



LES SAINTES-MARIES-DE-LA-MER IS A LONELY VILLAGE ON THE SHORE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SURROUNDING A MASSIVE FORTRESS CATHEDRAL WHICH IS THE GOAL OF AN ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE OF THE GYPSIES.

THE PEASANT OF THE CAMARGUE OFTEN RIDES TO FESTIVALS WITH HIS WIFE SEATED ON A PILLION BEHIND HIM.

THIS LITTLE WOODEN BARK COMBINING FIGURES OF THE TWO MARYS IS AN OBJECT OF REVERENCE AT LES SAINTES-MARIES. THE SILVER ARM IS SAID TO CONTAIN THE ASHES OF THE SAINTS.

sad, this old village, this beggarly sprawl of rent houses. It hugs at the knees of God's Holy Church, like battered pilgrims praying for a miracle to heal their sores. There could scarcely be a better climax to the journey through the hot plain than this pale, hollow-eyed village, bent so low. On the towers of the little town there is a clock with its hands off. I daresay no one cares what time it is. There is no market place, except the small bull-ring between the church-wall and the vicarage, and no belt of trees anywhere to be seen, save far away on the edge of the lagoons where a line of umbrella pines stands like a thin, black cloud. Dust is whisked up from the only street of consequence, and by the veranda of a hotel stood a number of listless idlers. Inside the hotel someone thumped at a piano, and through the window could be seen several couples dancing. The sea whines like a peevish woman, as though lamenting an encroachment of the earth, heaped along its edge in white sand dunes, and as I wandered down through these dunes I saw live figures, muscular, grim-looking men with the terrible mien of those who work hazardously in the sea, hauling fish to the village. I shall never forget the sight of those fishermen. It was as if Les Saintes Maries had become a great, light curtain held against the sky, and someone moving in the heavens had been reflected in strange shadow across it. I saw them for only a minute, but of all the village those taut, hauling figures are what I most remember.

I suppose the average person would never dream of coming to Les Saintes-Maries if there were no Church here; and the truth is, if there were no Church here there would be no village, and they tell you that it is only because God chose this spot for the landing of the Holy Marys, that any of the human race elected to come. Well, that may be so; but I fancy it was hallowed ground long before this Christian Visitation, and

even unimaginative archaeologists will swear that a Roman Temple once stood upon the site of the Church of the Three Maries. I would go farther than that and not alone—and say that when all was dark there was worship of the Fire and the Sea, and of Gods which are hinted at in primitive moments, here at Les Saintes. It is a solemn thought. It takes away all the garishness of the village, and even levels the great Church, and leaves the site a strange wilderness, a strange Holy Place for the imagination to roam in.

But, as I have said, one would never dream of coming here, to let imagination roam, or for any other purpose, were it not for the great Church of Les Saintes-Maries, and with that at hand there is no need to conjecture silly things about the Pagans, of whom already enough scandal is spoken.

The Church of Les Saintes-Maries is a church as queer as any I have ever seen. Like the great fortress by the Rochers des Doms it bespeaks, in its exterior at any rate, the mailed piety of the Church militant; and here it stands like a fierce block-house set up in some No-Man's Land to protect the remote extremities of the Empire of Jesus. As such it is no longer needed. This forgotten shore is no one's envy any longer, and the powerful walls of the church have become a mockery. Not from any point of view can it be called architecturally beautiful, and no adornment of any kind lightens its exterior severity. Even the inside is bare except for a lot of tawdry emblems and some alien columns preserved in the apse. It is dark and mysterious until you get accustomed to it, and then you begin to observe that there are really three churches here—the subterranean chapel in which are preserved the so-called remains of Sarah the black servant; the middle church, which is the ordinary place of worship; and the upper, suspended chapel, in which the bones of the two Marys

are cherished. The well-head in the nave gives access to a supply of water which was maintained for use during the defence of the church against Saracenic attacks. The crypt is pitch dark, except for a few spluttering candles and the dim ray that comes to it from the nave, which itself is dark enough. Here is an altar which looks as if it had at one time served as the lid of a Christian sarcophagus; it is supported by modern pillars, which do not seem to be altogether in place. Nearby there is a slab of basalt which obviously is the relic of a fairly ancient monument; on it there is a receptacle in which are kept the bones of the servant Sarah. These bones and a slab of stone on which they lie are the magnet which draws countless thousands of wandering gypsies to Les Saintes-Maries.

It is considered that this pilgrimage of the gypsies to the tomb of Sarah is the successor of something of the same kind which far predates the Christian era. The Marquis of Baroncelli, one of the Felibres, has written a little monograph in which he asserts his theory that the gypsies in coming to Les Saintes-Maries every year, a huge concourse of them from all parts of the world, do but fulfil a tradition which goes back to the time of the lost continent of Atlantis, when the Redskins of America and the gypsies of Southern Europe were members of a common conglomeration of tribes in nomadic occupation of vast lands of Atlantis. It is an intriguing supposition, which the learned Marquis insufficiently supports. At all events the period of this double pilgrimage of the gypsies to the tomb of Sarah and of the Christians to the shrine of the two Marys is one of astonishing activity and picturesqueness in Les Saintes-Maries. Then it is that the sports and pastimes of the Provençals are seen at their best, with enormous crowds now deep in the passionate fervour of adoration, now lost in the excitement of bull-fights, horse-races,

farandoles, and all the characteristic gaiety of their race.

The Christian tradition of Les Saintes-Maries is extraordinarily interesting. We know that Jesus dwelt in Bethany for some years as a guest of a family who were hounded out of Judaea after the Crucifixion. The old historians tell us that the Magdalene, Mary Jacoby and Mary Salome with their servant Sarah, and Lazarus, and others of Christ's followers were cast adrift from the shores of Syria in a frail boat. For many days this little vessel sailed the high seas guided by the invisible hand of God, and in good time it came to these deserted Mediterranean shores where the holy people landed, full of joy and thankfulness. Mary Jacoby, who was the sister of the blessed Virgin, together with a companion Mary Salome and their servant Sarah, remained on the spot to which God had directed them, Mary Magdalene went on to Ste Baume, where she spent her last days in a little grotto pierced in the face of the cliff. Martha set forth to rid the countryside of that dragon which was called the Tarasque, and Lazarus set up his house in Marseille. But here at Les Saintes-Maries the two Marys and their servant died, having spent their years in sad contemplation and prayer at the little chapel they had built with their own sweet hands. Perhaps in course of time they had gathered about them a number of men and women to whom they had brought the precious solace of their message ; and Sarah, their black servant, grew to be cherished by the nomadic tribes of dark-skinned gypsies who pass that way at certain seasons of the year, and who come now during March and October to honour her tomb. This is the story told by the ancient historians of Les Saintes-Maries ; it is the story which fired the imagination of good King René, by whose efforts a tomb called that of the three Marys was discovered. Their ashes were placed in a

casket which is preserved in the church, and which amid the passionate rejoicings of crowds of pilgrims is displayed in the body of the church on May 24th and 25th of each year.

There is a striking view from the summit of the tower, but it is one of desolation, and a curious sense of unreality steals over you, which is partly due to the immense desert, partly to the whining sea, and partly to the little village at your feet; perhaps largely to the little village at your feet because it is so isolated, and because its attempts at justification in the modern world are so pitiful. They have planted an avenue of trees from what passes as a public square down to the beach, and valiant attempts have been made to turn Les Saintes-Maries into a seaside resort. But the trees grow sickly, dust whirls through the public square, and through the fly-crusted windows of the little hotel a group of burly fishermen dance to the strains of an accordion. Not much gayer than that is Les Saintes-Maries, except at the time of pilgrimage, when it is the gayest, the most heartening place in all France.

XI

LA VENISE PROVENÇALE

A CERTAIN amount of desolation is good for the soul. There is a streak of the sinister in human kind, and the curious fascination of drear things is not rarely, nor fruitlessly exerted. I shall not attempt to explain what that fascination is, or why its lure is so often successful. But I know that it exists. I have come upon men in the deserts of Africa ; I have shared their huts in the drear uplands of Asia ; I have broken bread with them in the pale solitudes of Australia—but have never been able to find out what it was, at root, that took them there.

In a lesser degree, a very much lesser degree, it is to the fascination I have spoken of that I attribute my decision to reach Martigues from Arles, by the local lines which take you through as near an approach to desert as you will find in Europe. It is a very small area. As you pass through it you are, I fear, comforted by the fact that adequate civilization is never far from you. The sensations conjured up by drear solitudes and far horizons lose the sting of certitude when some snug hotel is less than a day's journey away.

This region of desert, here called the Crau, is a stony wilderness that stretches from Arles to the Étang de Berre, and the Étang de Berre is little more than a watery continuation of the desert. The northern edge of the Crau is planted with patches of olives, mulberries and vines, and the village of St. Martin du Crau becomes a cool oasis, a forest of trees and gardens from

which the angular features of the village poke skywards. Thenceforward, however, the aspect of an arid, stony desert burdens the hot leagues of the Crau, which seems to stretch endlessly, a hard, gravelled surface laid over with small boulders the shape and size of melons.

On the north it is bounded by the Alpilles which, superficially, seem to be of the same geologic formation, though scientists will tell you that, as the Rhone is responsible for the Camargue, so the Durance is responsible for the Crau. Another story is that Hercules, in his combat with the giants, used the very stones that now lie scattered all over the desolate plain, and forgot to clean up the rubbish, so elated he was with his victory. This legend probably derives from the early combats between the Phoenicians, whose god Melkarth is identified with the Greek Hercules, and the Ligurians, who were a people of much greater stature than their adversaries.

I walked for a few miles over this sterile plain and do not wish to repeat the experience. Several times, with the intention of begging a glass of water, I went out of my way to reach what looked like a house but proved to be a ruin. The Crau is strewn with deserted dwellings. Once I came upon what seemed to have been a village, some dozen or so of stone houses given over to the lizards. You may go a long way without seeing a vestige of plant-growth, though now and then you come upon a stunted shrub bearing a delicate heliotrope flower.

Presently I came to Miramas, the P.L.M.'s enormous railway centre. The village lies some distance away from the depot, and is crowned with the ruins of a château that is not quite as attractive as it looks. The depot itself is a mass of rails, sheds and shanties which reminded me of the Australian goldfields, and I was glad

to take a seat in the diminutive train which goes thence to Port de Bouc and Les Martigues.

The route lay along the western edge of the Crau, through hot, shimmering miles of wilderness which led up to the harsh *étangs* and the barren hills which surround them. Port de Bouc, given over to the preparation of oil, soap and salt, was scarcely inviting, and the neighbourhood still less so. The hills are bare of vegetation except for a few stunted pines bent low by the mistral, and have a character that is alien to Europe. The whole scene is reminiscent of Colorado—barren plain, then barren hills enclosing stagnant lakes, a few tall chimneys, a group of iron huts, a small, white village : that is the burden of it all the way to Martigues, which I reached at dusk.

The station is about two and a half kilometres from the town. A bright yellow autobus meets the train, and for a modest franc will hurtle you down hill to *La Venise Provençale*. One doesn't mind the hurtling. It would be minded less if one's neighbour were not a fat white woman who, at every lurch of the bright yellow autobus, flings her arms about one's shoulders, and giggles zoologically. I am not a very large man, and I like to be polite and amiable, but a fat white woman can be very exasperating. Crushed to her bosom I felt like an insecure chalet overwhelmed by a mountain avalanche. I was wondering what, in the circumstances, an inoffensive gentleman should do, when the bus drew up in front of the Hôtel Moderne and I withdrew from my voluminous neighbour.

The meeting-place of all Martigues is the Cours du 4 Septembre, a short boulevard about two hundred yards long, planted with two lines of fine plane-trees the leaves of which meet in the centre to form a shady tunnel. Here are innumerable cafés, a dancing-club of sorts, called the Cercle l'Étoile, and a cinema. At

seven o'clock there could not have been a single Martigan outside the Cours, which was as densely thronged as Regent Street at midday. The chattering groups marched up and down, up and down talking, laughing, resting at a café to take an apéritif, until about eight o'clock when they gradually dispersed, presumably to their dinner-tables. At about ten o'clock they again streamed into the Cours, and what with their shouting and laughing, and the execrable band of the Cercle l'Étoile, the din was insufferable until an hour which speaks ill for a fishing village.

When the village had quieted down I looked out of my window. It was too warm to sleep, and I was much too disturbed in my mind. The Cours du 4 Septembre was as still as if it had been a vale in the forest primeval. Perhaps it had dreams of the forest primeval. Perhaps to the blood of those brooding trees there came a whisper, infinitely small, from the dim ancestry of trees, before the first soul entered like a bright bird into Eden, when the light was undivided from the darkness, and the forest lay still, without life or form, waiting stealthily for the moment when the spirit of God should move upon the face of the waters.

The plane-trees shuddered ever so lightly. It was like a strange sound in my own heart. But the deep green wall of darkness which ran down the Cours du 4 Septembre moved not a leaf. I tried to pierce through it to where, a few hours before, there had been a strange bright motley of people who, like myself, love their own kind and the ways of their own kind, the drinking and laughing and walking up and down; the people who drink and laugh and walk up and down, and have dominion over all the earth. It is mournful to think of the deep green wall of forest primeval when there were none of these people, and the darkened world stood waiting.

On each side of the green wall of plane-trees are houses which glow like heaped up ashes in the starlight. They do not lie there with the stillness of sleep, but with the stillness of expectancy. They bend out lower and lower, distantly, till there are no more of them but only darkness. Above them is a clear sky, breathless and still, patiently silent like all the world.

They call Martigues La Venise Provençale, and I have spent most of the morning in a fruitless endeavour to find out why. Martigues resembles Venice about as closely as any other port of the Mediterranean does, and it is a good deal less picturesque than some. There are dirty streams in every gutter ; but what are these for canals ? There is also a beach which stinks horribly from the rubbish at its brink, which looked well enough, however, if you were far enough away. It was like a black band on the edge of the blue sea.

I came upon a few cross-tempered boatmen whose nets were in my way. They inelegantly rated me for treading upon some of their handiwork. Still hopeful, I made for the only canal I could find, and saw there a couple of artists who were busily sketching the scene which faced them. It was a picturesque scene in the conventional way associated with fishing-villages—a strip of water like a blue flame (all Provence, on a hot day, is like a flame variously coloured), a fat boatman, a basket of fish, and a heap of rigging which flung fugitive shadows on the ruinous walls of a red and white dwelling. To the left, the Étang de Berre lay still and glassy ; in the distance was a line of hills, slate-coloured against a bank of white clouds. Out of this, no doubt, a decently attractive picture will be made by the two industrious artists ; but I am astonished at their capacity for absorbing, without any noticeable effect, the vile odours that rise about them.

It is no affair of mine. Probably they are both quite happy. Probably they will paint little masterpieces; or, at any rate, something good and beautiful, something better than La Venise Provençale would lead you to expect—a dream of blue and silver, orange and white, to be enclosed in four gold bands without any rubbish at the brink, or any unwholesome odour, or cross-tempered boatman.

Close at hand is the unstable church of the Madeleine, which is a seventeenth century building. It seems to have been raised in a hurry, but it is a likeable church, all bright and cheerful inside, with a jolly company of plaster saints whom I would like to invite to a table in the Cours du 4 Septembre. Joan was there, looking as if she had been rebuked by Saint Catherine. And Peter stood with his great keys, an amiable Peter, like the generous host my optimism has always imagined him to be.

Close by there is another church, cool, clean and sweet-smelling. The stone-paved floor had just been washed as I entered, and in the air was the refreshing smell of soap. As I sat there, idly thinking, a priest entered like a black shadow and went to one of the side altars; and presently quite a number of worshippers came in. There was an old man whom I took to be a doctor, or an attorney, or possibly a Government official. He took off his glasses and wiped them, curled his moustache, and then knelt humbly before the Blessed Virgin like a child before its mother at bedtime. There were other men, clearly of the business class, and many women. I could hear the rustle of beads and the whisper of prayers. Before a statue of St. Catherine, in one of the side chapels, a solitary little girl was praying. She prayed so earnestly that I added my own supplications to hers and prayed that St. Catherine would be kind. It was all very refreshing like the smell of the soap.

Outside it was hot; in here it was cool. Outside there were cobbles, like scales on a fish; in here there were broad, washed flagstones, clean as the floors of Heaven. Outside there were people intent on wordly things, passing irritably up the street to buy oils and safety pins, or to pay their insurance premium, or have a tooth extracted, and what not of vexatious tasks besides; in here there were people restful, sleepy and prayerful, looking on the sweet faces of the saints and listening to the tranquil drone of the priest. It was like listening to cicadas beneath a fig-tree. I had no wish to leave the church. It would have made me happy to lie down on the cool flagstones at the foot of St. Catherine, whom I always think of as that fragile little girl in Giovanni Bellini's altarpiece at the Venice Accademia, with eyes and lips too tender for any cruel glance or unkind word ever to have passed from them, and yet the figure of one who was strong as well as gentle, and with a shadow at the lips which told of humour; and with a brow that was like a white cloud with the glory of God upon it:

> Salve Regina, Mater misericordiae;
> Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve!

All the worshippers went out into the street again, and I followed them.

The façade of the church of St. Genies is adorned with a statue of Gerard Tenque, of whom Martigues is inordinately proud. He is also honoured by a commemorative tablet on the *Mairie*. Certainly, he has as much claim to honour as most men, for did he not found and organise that great and good body of pious warriors, the Knights of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem?

In the year 1023, the Caliph of Egypt granted to some merchants of Amalfi permission to establish in Jerusalem a hospital for the use of 'poor and sick' Latin

pilgrims. The fame of this hospice spread rapidly and donations poured in from all over Europe, so that its utility increased, and, concurrently, the need for more elaborate organization arose. Now, when Godfrey de Bouillon took Jerusalem, the wounded of his army were tended by one Gerard, rector of the Amalfi hospice, and to him were given large sums of money by the Crusading leader and his knights, for the purpose of endowing the institution. Already a number of great knights had joined the fraternity of the hospice, and it was considered a great honour to be in the service of the hospice.

It was then that Gerard conceived the idea of forming a properly-constituted religious body. Many great knights flocked to Gerard's standard, and the patriarch of Jerusalem invested every approved candidate with a black robe bearing on the breast an eight-pointed white cross. Each member thus invested made a vow of poverty, obedience and chastity. The establishment of the order was formally sanctioned by a bull of Pope Paschal II., in 1113, and five years later Gerard, the son of Martigues, was succeeded by Raymond of Puy.

About three miles away, perched on a hill, there is a lonely hermitage, and by the side of it there is a huge wooden cross which looks down on to Les Martigues ; but I doubt if the people in the Cours du 4 Septembre ever look up to the cross. They have no need to. One feels secure enough in the Cours du 4 Septembre. The old Martigan proverb *Beware the she-wolf and your heart's desire* is pretty well forgotten. There are no she-wolves now in the forests of Provence, and one's heart's desire is a simple thing, after all, just a little vermouth at the end of the day, beneath the plane-trees, and a giddy dance in the Cercle l'Étoile, and another walk beneath the plane-trees, when they are dark and quiet ; and a kiss, and a sob ; and if it be sin a toiling half-way

up the hillside to the little overcrowded cemetery where the old Martigans planted the Cross of Crime ; and the casting of a little pebble at its base ; and the toiling down again, with pain for one's heart's desire.

The wind comes, and the rain, and many of the pebbles go rattling down the hillside from the base of the cross ; and like that the sins are forgotten : and at the end of the day there is a little vermouth beneath the plane-trees, and a giddy dance at the Cercle l'Étoile, until the Cours du 4 Septembre is deserted and the plane-trees are again like a vale in the forest primeval.

All an afternoon was spent clambering up beyond the little cemetery, where stands the Cross of Crime, to the hermitage. It was a hard climb through stunted fir-trees and rocks. There were one or two deserted cabins on the way, and two ruined towers which, possibly, had been used as lighthouses. On the highest peak stood the hermitage, but there was not a soul to be seen though there must have been somebody there, for the bell tolled as I watched. I did not envy the ringer. It is a bleak, lonely spot open to the winds, which tear through the pine-groves with all the abandon of winds in high places. But for all this, the sun was aloft, and the grasshoppers sang cheerfully, and far away on the Étang de Berre the sails of many fishing boats flickered.

The descent, made down the opposite side, was relatively easy, so that I had vigour enough left to climb a second ridge. It was much the same as the first except for great gashes in the sides of the hills where a number of Germans were busy quarrying. Presently a storm came on and I was forced to take shelter in an old hut. I would have been happier in the village where the mastery of a storm is not quite so evident, and where there are no fir-groves to whimper and groan.

When at length I returned to Martigues it had a more adequate claim to the title of La Venise Provençale. Every street was under a muddy stream of water; but for all that I kept to my determination to move on that night to Marseille. As I mounted to Caronte, where the station is, I saw Martigues in much happier light. The sky was dull and overcast, but had broken at its western horizon to leave a belt of blue mist, with a hint of warm light behind it. Against this the village lay in silhouette. The sun, which had gone down behind the Étang de Berre, flushed a few piled clouds with gold and lay a transparent beam on Martigues, so that the little village had something of the radiant air of a Bellini background. At all events, I had at last seen the village in beauty, and softened towards it. Sometimes, now, I hanker after the saints in the Madeleine and the sinners in the Cours du 4 Septembre, and I know that a day will come when I shall return to Martigues.

The storm broke a second time as the odd little train steamed away from Caronte. Our route lay through wild gorges of the Estaque, disclosing occasional glimpses of the sea. But all the scene was largely blotted out by the rain which fell in torrents and found ready access through the closed windows and the roof of the compartment. A steady drip, drip, drip came from roof and walls, and soon the floor ran with water and the seats were drenched. I moved from one place to another, and may as well have saved myself the trouble, which I did in the end, silently enduring my wetting. The scene through the window was strikingly grotesque. The outline of the hills, like a Gothic confusion, shivered spasmodically as it was lit by the lightning. The thunder went rolling round in circles, faster and faster, bigger and bigger, blacker and blacker. I tell you, it was all very fearsome, this thunder and lightning, and the wind shrieking through forests of fir, and the sombre

wet sky, and a minute worm of a train wriggling in and out of it, and myself being soaked to the skin.

Arrived at Marseille I made straight for a familiar hotel, and for all the joys of baths and food, great easy chairs, whiskeys and sodas, and some wonderful old French books which I knew that hotel to contain.

MARTIGUE, WHICH HAS BEEN CALLED THE "VENICE OF PROVENCE," IS A FAVORITE RESORT OF PAINTERS.

THE CHIEF CITY OF BASSES ALPES, DIGNE IS PICTURESQUELY SITUATED BY THE RIVER BLEONE. THE CITY DATES FROM ROMAN TIMES WHEN IT WAS CALLED DINIA.

XII

AIX AND DIGNE

I HAVE lately had my share of superb summer weather. Now it is my ill-fortune to be visited by a succession of downpours that threaten to send me in haste to Ararat. At five o'clock on the morning which followed my arrival at Marseille, the city wilted under one of the fiercest thunderstorms of the season. It was a sorry Rue Noailles that I looked upon from my bedroom window, and I, also, felt not a little sorry. It is a sorry business I can tell you, to know that your train leaves for Digne, in the Basses Alpes, at seven on a ragged, wet morning. Still, I pursued my way with conscious heroism, and a number of other sad-eyed souls did the same.

The storm lessened soon after the ascent was begun; but it was still difficult to see anything clearly. Mist rolled serpent-wise through the valleys. Laggard clouds wound about every peak. The peaks themselves, below the clouds, were a deep black, and the sky was of that serrated slate which the storm loves. As the day wore on I could see pretty well the scenery we were passing through. As far as Aix it was familiar. At Aix I bought some rolls and consumed a breakfast for which I had long felt prepared. They were very nice rolls, with ham between them. They had that look of elegance one associates with Aix. But the vendor of them had nothing of the kind. She was evidently vexed at having been dislodged so early from her bed, and her toilet amply expressed the indignation in her breast.

On this occasion I made no halt at Aix, but I feel

disposed to give some rapid description of it, because it is a very delightful town, which anyone passing this way should visit. It is an easy, gracious town to wander in, with many noble buildings, and houses that date from the time when the much beloved René held there his cultivated court. It is a leafy, sequestered place, and wherever you go your ears are comforted by the soft plashing of fountains. It has, moreover, some very agreeable hotels. One might say that Aix positively glows with a sense of good breeding and good living.

It is probable that there was some sort of encampment, or settlement, on the sight of Aix long before the coming of Sextius Calvinus. However that may be, it was Sextius Calvinus, despatched by Rome to repel the barbarians that had been harrowing the colonies of Marseille, who is said to have discovered the warm springs of Aix, and to have established there an enduring town, which was called after him. Twenty years later, Marius, conquering on the plains near by a far greater enemy, rested at Aix and employed his victorious legions in ornamenting and completing the colony. Cæsar likewise halted to enjoy the delights of Aix, which had become a favoured Roman resort, sharing with Nîmes the glory of its displays in the arena and the theatre.

When the Roman Empire began to crumble, Aix, which lay on the Aurelian Way, suffered the consequence of its exposed position, and was subjected to attack by successive northern tribes until the coming of Charlemagne. Under that great emperor a certain security and prosperity were restored to the city. The town was sacked by the Saracens in 730, and lay impotent for many years. About 880, however, it was chosen as the seat of the Counts of Provence, and remained the chief town in this independent kingdom for six hundred years. The Emperor Charles V was crowned King of Arles in its Cathedral.

The principal thoroughfare of Aix is the Cours Mirabeau, which leads from the Place de la Rotonde to the Place Forbin. In the Place de la Rotonde is a decorative fountain, dating from 1860 ; there are others, including the Fontaine Chaude, supplied by the mineral spring, and the statue of Fontaine du Roi René, in the Cours Mirabeau. The fountain is surmounted by a statue of King René, the work of David d'Angers, but no reliance can be placed on the likeness. The king holds in his hand the muscatel grape which he introduced to Provence, and is quite a handsome figure, which, in truth, he was not, as you will see in the cathedral triptych.

Down both sides of the Cours are the fine seventeenth and eighteenth century mansions erected by the aristocracy of Aix. No. 3 is the Hôtel des Princes, which at different times has given shelter to Napoleon, Pius VII, and Maria Christina of Spain. There is a fine doorway at No. 14, the Hôtel de Raousset-Boulbon ; and No. 38, the Hôtel d'Espagnet, is notable for its colossal caryatids.

From the Place de la Rotonde radiate the Avenue Victor Hugo, the Avenue des Belges, and the Boulevard de la République, the Rue Esperriat, and, of course, the Cours Mirabeau. At the end of the Cours Mirabeau is the Place Forbin, whence the Rue de l'Opéra continues to the Place Miollis. From the Place Forbin goes the Rue Thiers, which leads to the Place du Palais, from which rises the Palais de Justice, a classical building, erected on the site of the old palace of the counts and governors. The Place des Prêcheurs is practically a prolongation of the Place du Palais ; it is adorned by an eighteenth century fountain, the work of Chastel, in which are medallions of Sextius Calvinus, Count Charles III, Louis XV, and Louis XVIII. Madame de Sévigné, who was for some time a guest at the palace of the governors, frequently referred in her letters to the Hôtel

d'Agut, a building erected in 1676. It is No. 2 of the Place des Prêcheurs.

Here also is the Church of Ste Marie Madeleine, dating from 1703, and adorned with paintings by J. B. Vanloo, who was born in Aix, and an interesting sixteenth century painting of the Annunciation. There is also a statue of the Virgin, said to be the finest work of Chastel, its sculptor, whose fountain stands in the Place. The church first belonged to the Dominicans or Preaching Friars, who established themselves here in 1218. It was burnt down in 1382, and rebuilt and consecrated as the Church of Notre Dame de Piété, in 1452, only to suffer an inexplicable collapse thirty years later. In 1691 it was rebuilt to a new design. There is an interesting market held three times a week in the Place—Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. These southern markets, with their colour and chatter, are always worth seeing.

Opposite the Chapelle des Ursulines, in the Rue Mignet, is the Rue Constantin, which leads to the Rue St. Laurent; this in turn, conducts to the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, with the seventeenth century Hôtel de Ville, by the side of which is a fine belfry dating from 1505. The Bibliothèque Méjanes, founded in 1786, is one of the great libraries of France, and was founded by the Marquis de Méjanes, first consul of Aix. The collection has been considerably enriched by subsequent gifts and bequests. Among its treasures is the missal illuminated by King René. To the south-east of the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville is the Place aux Herbes.

Northward from the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville goes the Rue Gaston-de-Saporta, in which are some notable eighteenth century houses; observe especially the Hôtel d'Estienne by Puget. At the end of the street is the Place de l'Université, in which are the Faculties of Law and Arts. The University of Aix is said to have been founded by Louis II of Anjou in 1413, but even before

that date its nucleus existed, in the form of an Academy of Science and Letters founded by Ildefonso II.

Here also is the Cathedral of St. Sauveur. It is of several different periods, and if it is not as magnificent as many of the northern cathedrals, it is none the less an exceedingly dignified one, and enshrines the memories of many centuries of Provençal life. The oldest part dates from the eleventh century, but the choir was added in the thirteenth century, the tower and one aisle in the fourteenth, and the other aisle in the seventeenth. The doors of the portal are fine pieces of work by Jean Guiramand of Toulon, and date from the early sixteenth century. They are protected by shutters and are adorned with statues of Prophets and Sybils.

The interior is interesting only from its works of art. In the thirteenth century nave there are several interesting paintings, including, on the north side, the Incredulity of St. Thomas, by L. Finsonius of Bruges, a pupil of Caravaggio ; and, on the south side, two fifteenth century triptychs, one by Nicolas Froment of Avignon, known as the *Burning Bush*, and showing King René and his queen, Jeanne de Laval, with saints. This, a beautiful work, is Froment's masterpiece. In the first of the northern aisles is a stone altar-piece of 1470, showing St. Martha and the Tarasque. In the eleventh century Baptistery, which was practically reconstructed in the sixteenth century, are eight antique columns said to be from a temple of Apollo which originally stood on this site. There are seventeen fine tapestries in the choir, executed in Brussels under the influence of Quentin Matsys, and once in Canterbury Cathedral. They were sold to Aix under the Commonwealth. The fifth century sarcophagus of St. Mitre lies in the Chapelle St. Mitre in the apse.

The pleasant little Romanesque Cloister adjoins the Cathedral on the south, and next to this is the Arch-

bishop's Palace, with some interesting tapestries and furniture. Among these are Beauvais tapestries, representing scenes from *Don Quixote*. The Fifth Room, or Chambre de l'Empereur, was occupied by Napoleon in 1853; and the Fourth Room is said to have witnessed the reconciliation of Louis XIV with the Grand Condé in 1660.

From the Place de l'Université, the Rue du Bon Pasteur conducts to the Etablissement Thermal, erected in 1705 and preserving, in the courtyard, fragments of the original Roman piscina. In the garden is the fine Tour de Toureluco, the only survivor of the old fortifications of Aix. The Cours Sextius leads back to the Boulevard de la République, and so to the Place de la Rotonde. Alternatively, you may return from the Cathedral via the Hôtel de Ville and the Rue Maréchal Foch, which is continued by the Rue Aude, meeting the Rue Espariat opposite the agreeable little Place Albertas, which really serves as a courtyard to the eighteenth century mansion which surrounds it on three sides. Following the Rue Espariat you come to the Church of St. Jerome, where Mirabeau the younger married Mlle. de Marignane in 1772. There is a Gothic tower, relic of a fifteenth century Augustinian convent, opposite the church, and, a little farther along, the Fontaine des Augustins. So you come to the Place de la Rotonde.

A short street leads thence to the Rue Cardinale along which you come to the Fontaine des Quatre-Dauphins, an excellent piece of work dating from 1667. The Rue Cardinale ends at the Church of St. Jean-de-Malte, built in the thirteenth century, and added to in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was founded by Raymond Berenger, and contains, within, a reconstruction of the Tomb of the Counts of Provence; adorned with statues of Ildefonso II, Raymond Berenger IV and his wife, Princess Beatrix of Savoy, gowned in her robes of state,

and wearing her coronet. There are also some good ancient paintings. The adjoining building is the old Priory of the Knights of St. John, in which has been established the Museum of Aix.

Note, on the ground floor, the *Galatian Soldier*, a fine work of the Pergamene school, dating from the second century B.C. Other interesting antiquities are here, and a Portrait of Henri III, probably by Clouet. On the First Floor are many interesting pictures and engravings, some of which, though perhaps it is impossible to ascribe them to particular masters, are of great value. Note in Room VI a Votive Relief of the fifth century B.C. In Room IX Rubens has a fine sketch on panel of wrestlers; and in Room X are some charming works by Granet, a native of Aix, who bequeathed to the museum a collection containing examples of Ingres, Brascassat, Guillem, Drouais, Loubon, and other Frenchmen. Notable, among others, in Room XII is La Tour's Duc de Villars ; and an early work (sixteenth century) called *Peace*. Works of the Dutch and Flemish schools occupy Room XIII, and Italian artists are represented in Room XIV.

I hope my digression, on the subject of Aix, will prove of some use ; meanwhile, it is still raining, and the little train to Auban is impatient to move.

We left Aix a far more numerous company than we arrived there, and as we continued I observed a great change from the scenery of Les Bouches du Rhône to which the last few weeks had accustomed me. No longer the wide, bluish plain, or the rocky escarpments of the Alpilles. No longer vast, pale, shimmering lagoons and an aspect of the East. But hills growing loftier as we threaded northwards through their valleys, like one of their own serpentine mists. Still, however, there was the atmosphere of Provence, and for that I was grateful. There were poplars and mulberries, lines of

feathery cypress trees, waggon-loads of grapes, and stained ruin perfectly grouped on hillside and bare summit.

But henceforth I shall miss the wide horizons of Arlesian Provence. My impressions were, of course, a little discoloured by the persistent thunderstorm. It was a majestic sight, these cloudy legions with dull-stained, streaming banners passing from summit to summit, shaking the earth, bending the trees, advancing through dark gorges, encircling half a dozen peaks ; growing, growing, growing, in size and ruthlessness as any number of dark-browed reinforcements came tumbling out of the sky.

It gave the scene diversity. Otherwise it was mountain, forest and valley. Once or twice a river was crossed, a ruin passed, a village touched ; but on the whole the storm had it all to itself. At St. Auban I was obliged to change trains, and to spend an hour or two waiting for the connection. St. Auban is an unprofitable village to wander in because there is nothing to see.

From St. Auban there were not so many people travelling to Digne, and those who were travelled lightly. I had a carriage to myself, and deliberately sat away from the window ; for I had had all I wanted of storm scenery and now I only wished for the pleasant motion of the train, and the sound of the water dripping down the window. Even that can be pleasant, and I found myself careless of what stations we passed ; simply smoking and listening to the rain, and the curious sound of the engine whistle in the wet mountains, echoing from slope to slope. The hours passed quickly, and agreeably, and then Digne was reached.

Let me add that Digne is the chief town of the Basses Alpes, and lies on the left bank of the Bléone. It is frequented in summer by wise Frenchmen, who have discovered its healthy air, and the infinite variety of delight-

ful trips among the Basses Alpes. Its main thoroughfare is the Boulevard Gassendi, which divides the upper town on the Hill of St. Jerome from the lower, modern town. Although little enough of its history is available, we know that the Romans occupied the site and called it Dinia, and that in the Middle Ages it took a share in the Religious Wars. Its importance and population sensibly diminished as a result of the plague in 1629.

I have come to the mountains. They rise about me in wet, dark green masses, looking down to the lesser peaks and the far, sweet plain. I can dimly see the plain, like an ashen strip, on which the soft glory of the sun, denied to these hills, falls with a tenderness that is almost painful. It may not have been the plain of Arlesian Provence, but it seemed to be that, the plain which had, in a sense, become my home, there where I had loved to watch the night fall, and to observe the gentleness of life, the birds still singing, the children at their play, the peasants sitting out on their doorsteps because there was nothing to fear in this soft, slow descent of Night.

Now it was the mountains. Already dark with the storms, they grew black, like strange altars, as the sun went down in tones of blood-red which never quite achieved their promise of majesty. The sky was richer in the east than in the west, a phenomenon I have often observed in hilly countries, as when I once lived on the slopes of Gallipoli, looking out across the Dardanelles to the hills of Asia Minor. Often the setting sun, in its reflection beyond those Asiatic hills, was more beautiful and sumptuous than where it sank into the sea behind the twin peaks of Samothrace.

In a minute or two all was darkness. The little terrace which looks down to the valley was deserted except for myself and a competent monument to those Dignois who died in the war. The River Bléone, which ran beneath, was a black, triumphant flood. As I stood

alone, listening to its deep, round motion, I was profoundly moved as when one hears great music.

I turned back along the Avenue Gassendi, which now was singularly lifeless. The storm had passed, and with it the oppressive heat; but the people were afraid to emerge. The leaves of the plane trees continued to drip in feeble echo of the rain, and the gutters went boisterously along, fancying themselves to be young rivers, as boys with their first responsibility will fancy themselves to be young men. The shops and cafés glowed with a fullness of light, which is a cheap commodity in these hills; and having dined well at the little hotel I went to an adjacent café.

The café of France is a cheerful institution. In a way it is the camp-fire translated into a more civilized world, a place for us men to jostle good-humouredly, and air our prejudices with all the irresponsibility that is possible where no one cares a straw for our opinions. No doubt it is a waste of time, this sitting in cafés drinking, talking, and acquiring a generosity of pocket and opinion as the night wears on. No doubt it is a shocking form of idleness, and we have it on excellent authority that Satan, busy man, finds work for idle hands to do. But most of these men, in the provincial cafés of France, have worked pretty hard from dawn until there was no more light to work by; and if they have sweet, good-tempered wives and obedient little children to fetch their slippers and pipes, why, happy men, that is all they need at the end of day, and all they need in Paradise itself. But not all men have sweet, good-tempered wives and obedient little children. And so it is that when some of us have had our fill of the work which mankind finds for us we go to the cafés and give jovial Satan the chance he has waited for all day.

. . . . . .

When one has had a succession of wettings, and gazed

for several days upon a drenched, shadowy sky ; when one is southern born, with summer heat in one's veins ; when one has gone to bed with the feeling that to-morrow is certain to bring more wettings—then, what a joyous thing to be awakened by the sun on one's face, to hear the people calling in the streets, with a bright, cheerful note in their voices ; and to hear, from the room of an opposite house, a young girl singing like a bird because of the promise of the sun.

The great planes of the Avenue Gassendi spread and plumed themselves like magnificent green birds. The sound of the people bustling to their tasks was almost musical, and even the sparrows, in their gay agitation of leaves and twigs, gossiped in a merry, sunny tongue.

It was a hot, warm day, with a hint of cool wet beneath the surface of the ground and in the shadowy parts of the trees ; the bees came out ; cicadas tuned their notes and got ready for the noonday concert ; birds flew higher than the very mountains and saw still more peaks, stiff-necked and proud, extending in a path of light far northward to the Alps of Besançon and eastward to those which bend away from the Ligurian Sea ; the river streamed along as if its bed were made of glass, and a radiant light ran with it to spread and flood the plain ; over the bridge there was a merry passage of men and women and square, freighted drays, passing and repassing in man's eternal round of toil.

It was a day of goodwill and lightheartedness ; of the snapping of fingers at old philosopher Gassendi, to whom this grateful town, while caring not a fig for Aristotle, empiricists or epicureans, has raised a conventional statue in the public square.

Behind Gassendi's statue there is a narrow street that leads through the old, wizened part of the town to the Cathedral of St. Jerome. It is not very often one finds a church dedicated to the hermit of Judæa, who seems

just as worthy of the honour as many another saint. Still, I suppose he is in no way worried by this inattention, and the greatest cathedral would have less charm for his simple, scholarly mind than the delectable study which Carpaccio has given him in an inimitable series of drawings at the Scuola Schiavone in Venice. The cathedral has a Gothic façade of sorts, distinctly of sorts, fitted on to a transitional body ; and the tower is crowned with an iron lantern. A series of monumental steps descends from the doors, and above the portal is a rose window of the manner of that of Chartres. The interior is unexceptional, but pleasant, discreet and sweet-smelling, and with a cheerful flow of light.

To come again to the Boulevard Gassendi it is pleasant to descend through the quaint, old-fashioned streets of the Rochas. When it leaves the square, the plane-shaded avenue becomes like a country road, cool and quiet, with only a house here and there, and occasionally a field. Presently I came to the museum, in which are several agreeable Flemish pictures ; and then a hundred yards farther on I stopped by a Doric fountain, a thing of exquisite grace and charm, like a little Greek Temple dedicated to Pan. There is one so dedicated at Banias, in Galilee, and in just such a spot. Clinging to the sides of the fountain were great swelling masses of green moss, with the glossy water oozing through it to the basin below, forming in its passage little grottoes of cool, dripping mystery. On a sculptured head on one side the moss has grown to form an enormous green beard. Filled from the same source was a long trough at which a dozen women stood washing clothes. They bend and rub, rise and shake, bend and rub, twelve wrinkled old women ; twelve drab-coloured shapes, bending and rising, their shadows in front of them lengthening and contracting across the narrow trough where the water runs in perpetual renewal, splashing, gurgling, glinting

like beads in the bright sun. Near each one of the twelve wrinkled old women is a basket piled with wet clothes, wrung and twisted, yet to be shaken and laid out on some warm meadow, a fate so much fresher than being pegged and fettered to a line of rope in some foul tenement.

Presently the road turned, and led to the old fourteenth century basilica of Notre Dame, a big, barn-like, lonely church, in a ruinous condition though buttressed here and there by new stonework. It has a brown, shaggy, far-away look, which is all you can expect from what has been a very proud cathedral and now is but a half-way house for the dead. The Dignois bring their dead to Notre Dame, halt there the space of a prayer, and then set them away for ever in the crowded graveyard behind. The lofty, well-lighted interior tries hard to negative the mournful atmosphere of tall candles in flickering rows, and black, still catafalque, and dreadful words for the dead, who are none the happier for those who kneel and weep.

But this is not so if one may put any trust in the stained and faded frescoes which adorn both walls of the church. They illustrate the translation of souls to whatsoever sphere they have qualified for, and err on the side of generosity. That, of course, may express a feeling of optimism on the part of the artist, or may be a gentle hint to St. Peter to back up the artist's conception; which I hope St. Peter did when he came to the turn of this medieval illustrator.

Heaven is walled and crenellated. Obviously it is subject to pretty severe attack; and guarding its strict immigration laws—with what one takes to be a sort of Ellis Island purgatory halfway between Paradise and Hell—sits St. Peter, as unbiased as any statue of Liberty. Round about the walls are full-cheeked angels trumpeting for all they are worth to a procession of lean, toiling souls who approach the lowered drawbridge.

Another procession, much shorter, and composed of much fatter people, makes straight for hell, but will be sorry for its eagerness when it gets there. The domain of Satan is a sorry affair, nothing more, it seems, than a noisy, steamy kitchen, with great open fireplaces and any number of spits, sizzling with sinners. Those whom the cook has been unable to attend to hang from their heels like so many dead sheep in a butcher's shop, and it is clear from their expressions that they are all having a very hot time of it. It is a terrifying warning.

Behind the church are the tombstones where Death has put its full-stops in the eternal biography of Man. The graveyard is full of tawdry emblems of sorrow and pitiful exhortations ; but it is a quiet, restful place.

XIII

THROUGH THE BASSES ALPES

AN Englishman in the Basses Alpes is not a daily occurrence ; some of the hamlets I visited seemed never to have seen one before, and, I must confess, were not particularly amazed by the sight of one now. For that matter, foreigners of any sort are rare in these mountains. Perhaps they are frightened by Herr Baedeker's undiscerning remark that "the Basses Alpes are less interesting than the Alps of Savoy and Dauphiné, while the summers are hot and the inns often poor. The hills are mostly bare and furrowed with gorges, but here and there are spots of striking beauty." The great cicerone from Leipzig makes no mention at all of the most remarkable canyon and series of gorges in France, which lie along the course of the Verdon, and of the marvellous road which goes the whole extent of the range.

It is true, however, that much of the Basses Alpes is arid and forbidding, and I like the region because of that. It has a curious aloofness, and the promise of mystery which, however improbable, gives to one's imagination the hint of a thousand wonders. For almost the entire way the road to Les Moustiers Sainte Marie reveals nothing but sparse fields and barren valleys. But in no sense is that road monotonous. For several miles it rides along the projecting hip of an arid range, and then takes it into its head to coil around every ascending protuberance until at last it lies flat and straight upon an unsuspected plateau.

The plateau is bare. Lean husbandmen from a beggarly village far away scratch at its surface year in and year out, but the yield is scarcely enough to feed the children those husbandmen rashly propagate. At the eastern end of the plateau is a tall, dark, pyramidal mountain, which looks down upon these niggard acres on the one side, and then upon a vision of loveliness, away to the south, where Moustier's valley lies buried in exultant green.

As I came to the end of the plateau, and then upon a sight of Moustiers, I, too, exulted as doubtless the monks of Riez exulted when, footsore and homesick, they came through the cold passes and saw at their feet this soft expanse of fertile valley. Then there was nothing but a few huts. Now there is one of the sweetest little villages in all Europe. As I came down to the valley road, and continued through orchards and sunning groves to the village which reclines so gracefully on a hillside, I knew that many an old love would be displaced in my heart.

It is a moot point whether in the matter of accommodation I am any better off than the old monks. But I do not think I am worse off: the tradition of hospitality has been carried on with more or less success from the time when the stranger, if any such then passed this way, broke bread in the little monastery founded by Maxime of Riez. At all events, the innkeeper knows that hungry men should be fed, and that tired men should be given beds soft and yielding as a forest pool; and he knows, also, that every decent innkeeper has a daughter comely of face and figure, and fleet of hand and foot.

There is something curious and sweet about these old villages wedged into massive rocks. They seem to grow part of the element they are built upon, and though a close inspection may give a little needless anxiety as to their security, from a distance they seem firmly and

AT THE VIEUX PORT IN MARSEILLES, WHERE THE SMALL BOATS ANCHOR, THE FISHERMEN MAY BE SEEN MENDING THEIR NETS.

MARSEILLES' MODERN CATHEDRAL, STE. MARIE-MAJEURE, RAISES ITS HUGE AND PRETENTIOUS BULK ABOVE THE STEAMERS LINING THE QUAI DE LA JOLIETTE.

PEOPLE OF EVERY NATIONALITY RUB SHOULDERS ON THE SPACIOUS PROMENADE AT NICE. NICE IS ONE OF THE LARGEST AND GAYEST OF THE RIVIERA PLEASURE RESORTS.

irrevocably welded to the mountain side. Moustiers is like an old, damaged fresco, much faded, and revealed on a gigantic black and grey wall. It is rather as one examines a fresco that one examines Moustiers, beginning with the exquisitely weathered group of buildings at the base and rising step by step up the hillside, where the way is continued by fourteen Stations of the Cross which climb to Our Lady of Beauvoir, beneath the gilt star which hangs suspended between the twin peaks of Moustiers.

The streets are little more than narrow stairways that wind among a colony of Liliputian dwellings, and are always within ear-shot of cool, tumbling cascades. It is an ideal place for an artist to spend a few days in, with little pictures to set his fingers itching for the brush, and nothing in any way to offend his eyes. It is odd. It is beautiful. It is full of peace and quiet murmurings—a little objet d'art from the workshop of a peasant-minded genius.

The masterpiece of that peasant-minded genius is the little church which crowns his effort. It is half Romanesque, half Gothic; and a pedant would speak of the conflicting styles of its architecture. Such conflict, however, is an agreeable feature of many an old building, which has come into being largely by accident, growing bit by bit, like a tree, so that one hardly notices the growing-up. It is a process that gives these buildings personality, and an emotional, rather than a formal, beauty. The very absence of complete purity and finished perfection is half their glory.

Now, while I stood gazing at the church of St. Mary, there came an old lady with a face like the cobbled stones at her feet. Her expression was, however, sympathetic as she croaked out a greeting. I said good-day, and startled her by saying it was beautiful weather. "You are a German, Monsieur?" she asked. "No: an

Englishman, Madame," I replied. "Oh! you come from Germany, eh?" "No, no: from England!" "Ah! perhaps you live in Berlin, eh?" "No Madame, I am an Englishman from England, and I live in London." "Ah!" she muttered, "Germany, Germany, Germany." Then I tried to explain to her that Germany was not in England, and Englishmen not Germans, and London as little like Berlin as Moustiers was like Chipping Norton. "I do not need to go to school, Monsieur," she replied witheringly, "to know where Germany is, or who the Germans are, or what Berlin is like: is it not just over there, Monsieur?" she cried, pointing across the hills. Of little avail to explain any further that, even if Germany were just over the hills, it was not from there that I had come. At length, preparing to pass on, she shook her bony fists at me, and stepping over the cobbles as daintily as an old, withered woman with sabots may, she went off muttering strange words between her gums. At this moment a young housewife came out from an opposite door, and smiling graciously, assured me that every stranger was a German to old Madame Viesaux, who had lost four sons in the 1870 war and seven grandsons in the recent war; and that for her the world held but three countries—France, Germany and the Holy Land. The gracious housewife brought me a glass of goat's milk, and thus fortified I entered the church of Moustiers.

It has an air of religious charm which is felt immediately you descend the few steps from the square; it steals upon you like a perfume as you enter the dim rose light of the nave, and in the contemplation of it, and the absorption of a radiant spirit of prayer and holiness, all the vexed futility and harshness incident to modern life seem to float out of mind, fading till even the memory of them is gone. The church is like an ancient, feudal chapel, a noble family's place of prayer, a dim aisle of

rosy light and sweet shadows, like the moment a tired man feels when he neither sleeps nor wakes but, lying at rest in some open field, is vaguely conscious, though the subtle breath of sleep is already on his eyelids. It is a place for the knights and ladies of fairy books, suffused with the prayers of a romantic past. I knelt there myself —for so a man will be brought to his knees whoever he may be—with my face turned to the altar but with my eyes on the long, narrow window with its stream of old-gold radiance, and my dreams on something dim, and sweet, and impossible. Just then the bell tolled, a soft rounded note, like the echo of a sound, as if meant only for the ears of ghosts who haunt this quiet place.

Well, well : back into the light again, to the clear sky and bright piercing light, and the exercise of common sense ; to the world of butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers, which are three different names for three very similar rascals. Back again to the world which remembers 1870 and 1914, to the world of stock exchanges, munition factories, politicians, bad beer, archbishops, smallpox, baptists, births, deaths and marriages; the world of sense and nonsense, light and darkness, heat and cold, of the President of the United States of America ; and, God be thanked, the world of little lost villages, like Moustiers.

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During the morning I called at the presbytery for the keys to Notre Dame de Beauvoir, the chapel half-way up the precipice. They were enormous instruments, and as I marched on my way I felt like a burgher of Calais. They are heavy enough to be a handicap in the fatiguing ascent ; but for that matter all keys are handicaps, symbols as they are of civilization's most distressing feature ; and, from all I hear, even Paradise has taken a leaf out of our book and set its treasures under lock and key.

The climb to Notre Dame de Beauvoir is pretty steep.

For part of the way it is a succession of old stone bridges. There is a tendency to rest at each of them, to take breath, and to look down on Moustiers and the pleasant valley. Presently there comes a stone stairway, with the fourteen Stations of the Cross, and then you are high up and rather blown from the exertion. A passage through an old wall leads to the famous chapel. Three tall cypresses cast their shadow upon it, and the high needle-peaks of the ravine rise on either side. It looks on Moustiers and the wide valley, which is almost a plain, where the Verdon river, rejoicing in its freedom from the cramped depths of gorge and canyon, lies back in the sun, its arms outstretched.

Architecturally, the chapel is undistinguished, like so many other agreeable things ; but it has a fine carved doorway, with a porch held aloft on elegant columns. It wears this little dignity with a quiet, natural air, and the bands of coloured tiles in the gables are a pleasing vanity; even an old peasant woman may wear a lace cap on her head. And this is no peasant ; for it claims royal Charlemagne as its parent.

There is nothing inside except a cool dimness, one or two chairs to sit upon, and a pair of Moustiers vases, of an elaborate polychrome, reminiscent of Rouen ware. In the time of the fifteenth Louis faïence was a thriving industry in the little village at the foot of the precipice, but for some reason it is no longer made, and the old ware has become a matter for collectors. Its colour is a very rich blue, but the shape of the two vases in Notre Dame de Beauvoir is extravagant.

There was no one about. It was like a nest when the birds have done with nesting and taken their young into the marriage market. It needed sweeping and ventilating ; but no one goes to the shrine of Notre Dame de Beauvoir except on fête days, and one cannot be expected to sweep an empty house. For all that, it is

a peaceful place in a marvellous situation, and Our Lady must be glad of it as a quiet house to rest in, if the prayers of her children allow any time for rest.

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I was early abroad next morning, with a day's journey ahead of me and Entrevaux as my goal. With the pleasantest memories of Moustiers I set off along the road to Castellane, which lies at the other end of the Verdon gorges. The sun was in high fettle and the road mounted until it seemed to touch the blue and cream of the sky. Vagrant cloud-wisps still formed a soft, white roof to several lateral gorges, but when the main ravine was reached it lay in a blaze of rippling light. The green and purple slopes, falling sheer to a depth of several hundred feet, were luminous as if a fire burned behind them. I descended to a little green pocket half-way down the wall of the gorge, and there sat in the shadow of a great bush hung with clusters of crimson berries. Streams of water bubbled down to join in a series of cascades that leaped to the bronze depths of the river. The distant cascades looked like white veins in a wall of black marble, and close at hand were deep red gashes, like streaks of porphyry. Far to the right the gorge opened out into a wide valley where the river expanded among yellow flats and shrub-covered islands.

Above and around were the sharp, rugged peaks that are a feature of this range. Had there been sufficient time at my disposal, I would have made a few expeditions among these extraordinary peaks and gorges, though I doubt if sufficient courage would have been forthcoming to descend the Grand Canyon, an adventure which needs guides and ropes, and, in any case, cannot give you a sensation to compare with that which startles you as, for example, climbing to the Mourre de Chanier above Rougon, you look from the ' Point Sublime ' into the very depths of the canyon's mouth. It was an

experience I enjoyed on another occasion than this; but now I was obliged to content myself with the gorge that runs on to Castellane.

Even that is sufficiently hair-raising. The road hangs to the thin lip of the gorge, with about eighteen inches to spare between the wheel of a cart and the edge of the cliff. Now and then it widens to permit the existence of a cantonnier's lonely hut, and presently it finds a way out of its difficulties and writhes down to Castellane. Castellane is a pleasant little mountain town, strong enough to have resisted Charles V in 1536, Lesdiguières some time later, and the Imperial troops in the eleventh century; its walls and towers enclose the usual narrow streets, and an old Church of St. Victoire, mainly of the Romanesque. Up above, on a handsome crag which rises 600 feet from its base, is a statue of Our Lady big enough to guard a dozen Castellanes. Round about there are peppermint groves and fields of lavender; on a hot day like this, the perfume came stealing drowsily into the square where I sat drinking coffee; and only by an effort was I able to keep steadfast to my journey.

From Castellane a road runs east to Pont de Soleil, and thence to the Pont de Carvejan, where a road branches to the right and conducts to the village of Rougon. Near where the road forks a path leads to the Point Sublime, which is, perhaps, the finest point from which to observe the mouth of the Grand Canyon. It is dangerous to explore the system of gorges in the neighbourhood without the assistance of a good guide with ropes. These may be obtained at La Palud.

The descent from Castellane continued through a fine diversity of mountain scenery. The road lies betwixt valley and summit, streak of river below, high dark wall above, and a constant change of mountain shapes in front. It was all very beautiful. The rocky slopes were gradations of purple, green and black, with splashes of

deep crimson caused by a shrub which is common in these ranges. The distant peaks were a pure white, as if covered with snow, and what looked like the crumbled débris of a peak were villages.

Now it grew to late afternoon, and still there were several miles to go, with the valley far away in the distance. Not that I had any fault to find with that, but rather the contrary, for there is no time more agreeable on a journey than the last two or three hours of light. All the world prepares to lay aside its tools ; and presently its sleeves are unrolled, its trifles gathered up, and with its coat flung over its shoulder it sets off home ; it is the time to unsaddle your horse and wipe the sweat from his back ; or if the journey lies still ahead of you, to dismount and loosen his girth, giving him room to cool by the roadside while you take a pipe and watch how the hill-slopes deepen in shadow.

At such an hour I stood by the side of the road to Entrevaux while a number of peasants toiled by, with heavy staffs to assist them in their climb. There had been a fair at Annot. Annot is a big market town on the other side of the hills, and now the peasants of this region were returning with the stock or farm produce they had bought, or failed to sell. They were tired, and the old ones were bent like pilgrims climbing by the fourteen Stations of the Cross ; but the young men were erect and handsome, using their sticks without leaning upon them ; and the young girls were round-faced, large of eye and hip, calling roughly to their sheep, or cow, or geese—a healthy folk, who will fulfil with credit their purpose in this mountain life, bearing hardy youngsters, working day in and day out ; dancing gaily at a village fête, and for the first year or so comparing their husbands with other lovers they might have had ; tenderly stitching up an old communion frock for the first little gawky daughter ; gradually losing interest in

the wrinkles, and the growth of grey hairs, and standing aside at the village fête, gossiping instead of dancing; and, at last, old and tired, glad when the fair at Annot has come to an end, and mounting painfully up the long road with a goat or a pair of geese on a string.

Another hour saw my journey ended. It was still sufficiently light for a few men outside the walls to be playing bowls. Others were seen coming down the hillside from the few cultivated fields in the neighbourhood, and, by a splendid old bridge which spans a little tributary of the Var, there were several children throwing stones at a bottle. I entered Entrevaux over a drawbridge beneath which runs the main torrent of the Var. A moat, partly the bed of the river and partly an artificial channel, completely surrounds the place, and only by one of the three drawbridges is it possible to enter, for the moat flows as freely now as it ever did.

To a modern eye it is a curious village. Its oddness is apparent before you cross the bridge and enter through the stone door; and it is more apparent when you begin to mount its narrow cobbled lanes in search of an inn. I had been told that there were two inns; but that is no longer so. A girl who sat knitting by the doorway of a café in the little square assured me that the adjoining house, which rejoiced in a sign bearing the words Hôtel Moderne, was everything I could wish, but as she turned out to be the proprietor it is no use quarrelling with her inaccurate remarks. Anyway, when there is only one inn it is as well to conclude that its comfort and kitchen are all you could wish, even if the omelette it serves you is the most absurd-looking omelette you have ever set eyes upon. Finally, what can you expect in a little, half-deserted village which the Middle Ages forgot to take away with them? I offered thanks for the cognac and biscuits next door, and sat smoking in the little chair, listening to the few peasants inside, and the

crushing sound of the Var, and the occasional barking of a dog.

At Entrevaux there is a small, treeless square, but for the rest it is a maze of lanes some of which are not more than two or three feet wide. They are, indeed, more stairway than street. The whole place gives the impression of having been honeycombed from one great mass of rock, so that street, house and wall each is a continuation in stone of the other.

The houses are mostly of great age, and over some doors are carved the device of whatever craft was performed there in ancient days. An anvil and hammer, with the date 1668, is carved over one small portal, and over another are crossed keys. If you keep wandering through these narrow lanes you are certain to come upon the village church, and it is always agreeable in these southern lands to come upon the village church.

Entrevaux's church has an imposing tower; Joanne says so: in the dusk it looks more than ever imposing, and it seems to me that while the tower stands erect the little village will continue its ambiguous existence. The church tower rising above these villages reminds me of the flag above a fortress; both seem to signify that outside forces have not yet prevailed against their guardianship, and that they rise above a resolute community of hope.

There is a fortress some four or five hundred feet above Entrevaux. The lady of the café adjoining my hotel looked sadly up to that angular mass and detected in its desolation the cause of the decline of Entrevaux. Before the war there were several detachments of Alpine troops quartered there, and oh! what merriment they made, and what a sounding of bugles through the passes, as welcome to these folk in the village as the bugle of Charlemagne to Roland!

They spent most of their money and many of their

kisses in Entrevaux ; and that kept the village in some sort of modest prosperity, and its maidens in blushes. But now there is no money and very few blushes in Entrevaux ; for there is no one to spend and no one to kiss. It is easier to do without money than without kisses. Marianne, who brings pale goat's milk to the Hôtel Moderne has no more than a franc or two in the little tin box where she keeps her treasures, but it is not from poverty that she is wasting away.

Entrevaux lies in a *pays perdu*. Cultivation is prohibited by the surrounding mountains. It is difficult to see how the population of the village, gradually and surely lessening in number, can make any sort of a living. The village had two inns : now there is only one, and as I was the sole lodger, and that seemed to be a normal state of affairs, I daresay that one will presently be closed also. It is, as I have said, a *pays perdu*. Nothing can save it but the resurrection of that dead fort above, though life will continue in its narrow ways so long as the tower of the church holds up its proud head.

The portal of that church is a pleasant one to walk through, and the church itself a pleasant one to loiter in. The light is hopelessly dim, but there is nothing much there which needs the light. Dimness is an agreeable quality at times, and never more so than on a hot morning, in an unexceptional church. The pity is that, as a rule, those churches which should be dim are a blaze of light and those which should be light are in hushed dimness.

The pity of it ?—well, perhaps not. I love to sit in the deep gloom, among the Josephs and Marys and Peters and Catherines, who sit there too, in the deep gloom, and to fancy that it is dusk in heaven, with all the saints sitting out-of-doors, dreaming, and loving the dusk ; and quietly thinking of the days when they walked our earth and played in crowded squares with

other children, and talked to men and women of their own flesh and blood and finally took their departure. As the tide of dusk flows over them, in this church of Entrevaux, I seem to get a glimpse of heaven.

The village astir is little more animated than the village asleep. On a step sits an old, white-haired woman sewing up the loosened stitches of a pair of boots. Though she seems to be absorbed in her task there is an almost invisible movement at the edge of her lips, which tells that some other, distant thoughts are in her mind. On her lap is a tamed hen, which puts up its head at fairly regular intervals to be stroked. At her feet sits a little girl arranging stones into patterns. A young curé passes and raises his hat to the old lady. A boy grinds coffee beans. A dog yawns, and so do I.

From Entrevaux I continued by rail to Nice. The line goes first to Puget-Theniers, a little town situated amid striking scenery at the meeting of the Roudoule and the Var. It has a ruined castle and an interesting old church, in which is an altar-piece of the sixteenth century. A road goes hence, via the charming little medieval village of Sigale, to Roquesteron. The line now crosses the Cians to Touet-sur-Var, which is built against a steep-to-wall of rock with its church erected above a waterfall. In summer there is a motor-bus from Touet which ascends the striking gorge of the Cians. It passes Moulin de Rigaud, whence it is an easy ascent to Lieuche and Thiery, which has a ruined castle. The road continues to Beuil, visited for Winter Sports and for the ascent of Mont Monnier.

Passing on the right the old Roman Pont Ste-Petronille, the railway goes on to Villars-du-Var, which was founded by the Knights of Malta, who are depicted in two good altar-pieces, one in the Parish Church and one in the Chapelle-des-Pénitents-Noirs. The Tinée and the Var meet at the next village, La Mescla, leaving

which the train enters a tunnel, presently passing through the fine gorge of La Mescla. After leaving La Tinée (line to St. Sauveur) the gorge of Ciaudan is observed, and presently La Vésubie is reached. At the next station, Pont-Charles-Ambert, passengers change for Roquesteron, a pleasant excursion centre, the inhabitants of which are said to derive from Moorish forebears. The line to Nice is continued by St.-Martin-du-Var and Colmar, the junction for Grasse. Then comes Nice.

XIV

THROUGH THE MARITIME ALPS

To see the sun rise over Nice at six a.m. is something to be proud of. Those who go to Nice do not, as a rule, rise at six a.m. unless they are compelled to. And I must confess it was compulsion in this case. I had made a discovery to the effect that there existed, up in the hills of Liguria, an old, historic town which appealed to me for itself alone, and for its association with one of the tragic figures of Italian history—Beatrice di Tenda, ill-starred wife of Filippo Visconti.

The discovery that Tenda lay up there in the mountains, forgotten of the world, led me to investigate by what means it could be reached, and the fruit of those investigations was altogether agreeable, except for this one thing, that it drew me from a comfortable bed at the villainous hour of six a.m.; for the motor diligence which plies between Nice and Cuneo, halting for a space at Tenda, sets off from the Place Masséna every morning at seven.

Nice was not herself at this early hour. Or was indeed herself. It depends upon the point of view. The boulevards and promenades were empty, and the multitudinous windows of caravanserai were shuttered dismally against the warmth of young morning. Still, there were signs of the awakening. Tramloads of workmen cluttered in to the Place Masséna. Waiters were busily arranging the pavement tables of the Municipal Casino. Shopgirls, a little grumpy, a little over-rouged in the haste of their matutinal toilette, swept in front of their

shops ; and a lean, insomnious tourist, in melancholy plus-fours, stood waiting by a kiosk for yesterday's edition of the *Daily Mail*.

The effect of my early rising passed quickly. The sky had no clouds save a few ambiguous threads—the grey hairs of old Night. The prospect of a sunlit ascent to the hills mightily cheered me. I liked the dilapidated yellow autobus in which I took my seat. I liked my fellow-passengers—the pretty Niçoise on a visit to relatives at Cuneo ; the elderly, excitable lady, who repeatedly asked if we would stop at Mentone for coffee ; the unshaven villain who whistled very capably when he wasn't cracking jokes with all and sundry ; the clean-frocked brother and sister with round, pale faces and a bag of brioches ; and even the very superior couple who sat in the rear seat and spoke only in whispers.

I liked them. I liked the sun above. I liked the thought of what lay before us—wild gorge and twisting roads revealing new vistas at every turn ; the ardent vegetation of the lower slopes, and the gradual ascent by old, attractive towns ; the prospect of food and wines in old-fashioned inns, and of a talk with the curé of Tenda, who would show me the marvellous vestments of his church, and put me in the way of discovering precious relics of the old town ; graciously directing me to paths which lead pleasantly among the beauties of these seaward Alps.

At the signal to depart gears were wrenched to their places. The horn sounded. The little fat driver called farewell and slapped the knee of the pretty Niçoise, who giggled delightedly. The car lurched forward, and in a moment we were on our way from the date-palms of Nice to the clean, silent snows of the Alps. The air was startlingly fresh. At Mentone, bless the nervous heart of the elderly lady, we paused for coffee and rolls. Then

began the beautiful ascent to Castillon, up the valley of the Careï.

It is a fine, imposing valley, with the river at first a narrow, piping thread. Then the valley itself becomes narrower, and, as it were, more resolute ; and the little river becomes a torrent, hoarse-voiced as it leaps over round, sullen boulders and on beneath the wet lichen of old bridges. Admirable approach to lonely, lifeless Castillon, which lies in the centre of the Col de la Garde ! The climb is steep and circuitous. An aviator would give the distance from Menton to Castillon as just about four miles ; a motorist would more than double it.

Every twist in the road brought an extensive and lovely retrospective view, with the sea frequently revealed like a long steel blade lying flat in the sun. For ten minutes we seemed to make no progress. The wan, grey town, riveted to the summit of its lofty peak, came no nearer, until, suddenly, a good stretch of easy gradient opened before the whinneying bus, inspiring it to gallant effort, so that in a very few minutes we came to a halt at New Castillon, which has a couple of inns, both of them acceptable, but is of no account in itself.

The old town can be reached from the road in about ten minutes by a path which is not more than ordinarily difficult. It lies dumb and deserted. For two thousand years (by some accounts) it had within its now crumbling walls a community of men and women who, through all the calamity of famine, pestilence and war, held it precious, as their home, until on one dark, fearful day, less than fifty years ago, they shrank from it and fled as from a leper. Since that time none has returned to warm its hearths with fire, and patch its rent walls.

The cause of the terror was an earthquake, which appears to have killed no one, but to have brought with it a panic that has never been wholly overcome by the people of the neighbourhood. Some authorities, as I

have already hinted, put the age of Castillon at two thousand years ; others attribute its foundation to the Saracens, who made of it an impenetrable stronghold from which to sweep down upon the villages and castles of the neighbourhood. Neither Saracen nor ancient Ligurian has left much with which to identify his race, but the climb to the ruins is justified for the superb views down the Valley of the Careï on the one side, and that of the Merlanson on the other.

There are, however, a number of interesting vestiges of the old Castillon. The gabled church, with the date 1712 over the door, is more or less intact except for the campanile referred to in old descriptions but now altogether disappeared ; and at the end of the main street are vaults, a gateway with a pointed arch, and the perishing walls of what was once a redoubtable castle set there to block the enemies of Sospel. That is why the ridge was called the Col de la Garde ; but guardian no longer when it was sold by Charles of Anjou to Sospel's hereditary enemy, the lord of Ventimiglia, in 1261.

The descent to Sospel is by an easy gradient over a good surface. How the good surface is maintained on these roads, which, apart from their strategic significance serve but a sparse peasantry, would be a story worth the telling by someone who knew it, and knew also the lives of the lonely cantonniers, whose small stone huts occur at distant intervals, like block-houses on a frontier line. I once spent two nights at the hut of a cantonnier and carried away with me more lore of the mountain road than would have been mine had I spent a year traversing them alone. It is the luck of the walker, with a knapsack on his back, to run in with these men.

Sospel is an attractive village, with two good inns, an odd ruin or two, a dozen romantic lanes, an intriguing history, and a delightful old bridge with a tower now used as a dwelling. Through it runs the arrogant Bevera

ALONG THE RIVIERA GROUPS OF MEN AND WOMEN HAULING IN THE NETS FROM THE SEA ARE A FAMILIAR SIGHT. THE MEDITERRANEAN PROVIDES FRANCE WITH MANY OF ITS FINEST GASTRONOMIC DELICACIES.

THE CURVING PANORAMA OF THE RIVIERA INCLUDES A VARIETY OF TOWNS, VILLAGES AND CITIES RANGING FROM THE BRILLIANT CAPITAL OF PLEASURE TO SOME OF THE MOST CHARMING HILL TOWNS AND FISHING VILLAGES IN FRANCE.

beneath the overhanging houses of the old town ; trees and meadows make a cool circlet, and paths run up by olive groves to the deeper shade of pine-forests, whence you look down upon the stained community of dwellings in the basin below, and, if you have a taste for such things, reflect upon the time when that verdant hollow was a wide lake, which disappeared in the convulsion that formed the bed of the Bevera and the valley of the Merlanson.

It is nothing new, that community of dwellings. Far from it. It is as old as the road to Rome, and doubtless a good deal older. Early in the march of the Cæsars into the land of Gaul it was a fortified Roman station, which gradually grew to a commanding city and remained as such when grass began to grow in the streets of Rome. In the ninth century it went the way of many southern towns and was sacked by the Saracens ; and later it became the prey of Guelf and Ghibelline, of Lascaris and Grimaldi—a bone round which many a lordly dog snarled and bickered.

To-day it is little more than a village ; but none the sadder for that. It is divided into two by a boisterous river, and over the river is an old bridge of the eleventh century, with a stupid tower, now converted into a dwelling, to guard it. An artist would halt at Sospel long enough to sketch that bridge, and the foolish tower with newly-washed red underwear hanging from the windows. I myself halted, though no artist, long enough to paint it vividly upon my mind, in tones of grey and brown ; and to back it with a row of balconied houses, lively with the bunting of many wash tubs ; to fill in a broad band of blue sky above, and a narrow one of brown-flecked blue beneath, where the river rolled.

One comes to Sospel for little things like that. They are agreeable and restful. Somehow, you order your hours to proceed with proportion, as it were, to those

little odd things—a leisurely wandering among odd lanes that clamber backwards from the river, and reveal an occasional façade so old, so brown, that you delight the moments with an eager poring over worn, half-obliterated carvings, and semblances of dates, and crests ; a leisurely gossip, as you lounge upon the hot quay, with some old resident who points to distant ruin or belvedere whither you climb in the cool of the morning.

For Sospel is essentially at peace. It has no longing for the time when its population was counted in many thousands, and its shops in hundreds. The few shops along the quay, and in the main square, are fully enough —more than enough, I gather—for its needs. Of its towered walls, to which entrance was given by five gates, there is only a vestige. But their need is gone. No longer is there a multitude of houses, several law-schools, convents (of which there is a picturesque ruin just beyond the Place St. Michel) and monasteries, and a score of churches to be guarded.

It is amazing whither that score of churches has vanished ; for now there is only one that is of any consequence. I mean the church of St. Michel, in the arcaded square. St. Michel's church is nothing to get very excited about ; but it is, nevertheless, a friendly church. By its side is a Romanesque bell-tower, a pleasing feature, gracefully proportioned, and quite evidently of much older date than the seventeenth century church itself. How often have those bells, which are supported in a curious steeple, rung out the alarm as ruthless invaders swarmed down the hills which beset the town on all sides ! The church itself, which is approached by a flight of steps, is not remarkable save for its very beautiful pillars, and a retable of the Immaculate Conception, possibly by Brea. But its façade is of no little beauty, and one can imagine it to have fitted the picture not unworthily, when gallant lords and their

ladies came out of their mansions (which still leave an echo of grandeur in many a dilapidated street), to take the solace of mass, or to enjoy the excitement which attended the wholesale burning of heretics. In the square there is a little drapery shop where a kindly gentleman will give you the key to the chapel of the Penitents, but there is only an indifferent Pietà (highly prized for some obscure reason) to reward your pains. You do not often come upon exceptional church pictures this side of the Italian frontier.

The way now traverses a closely-cultivated plain, and then ascends by a pretty stiff gradient twisting interminably. There is little or no sign of habitation until we reach the Col de Brouis, where, in his lonely cabin, lives a member of the Corps de Garde with his wife and child, and a little donkey that is clearly no longer inspired by the superb view of snowy mountains seen from this arid Pass. Only a donkey could fail to be impressed by that view, which is like the view of some precious land out of faery, a sweep of symmetrical mountains, snow inlaid, and with a soft bloom upon them like the bloom on old ivory. A pure, chill wind blew down from it, though in the sun there was a gracious warmth, that still spoke of the south.

We descended by way of terraced fields, an odd shepherd or two, and a goose-girl from a beggarly collection of huts on the roadside. At the little village of La Giandola we touched the Roya, one of the most attractive streams in Liguria. There are fine schistose rocks beetling up behind La Giandola, which accordingly partakes of perilous grandeur. That is an effect common to all the castled nurslings of the Roya valley, and it raises one's expectations concerning Breil, which lies a few miles down the valley from Giandola.

Although the expectations may not be fully realized there is no doubt that Breil is romantically situated. It

is a large village overlooked by the curious tower of Crivella and so placed that it commands a great deal of the Roya valley, a fact which ensured it some prominence in the days when the great families of Nice, Tenda, Ventimiglia and the rest were at their tiresome bickering. Its prominence far pre-dates that era of course, and its present name is said to be derived from Praelium (combat), which it gained as the result of a fierce battle between the factions of the rival emperors Otho and Vitellius.

A few vestiges of the ancient ramparts are to be seen, and I came upon a singular gateway ; but except for that and the mute tower of Crivella, there is nothing remarkable. Tall, arcaded houses line the narrow streets, which receive but a niggardly portion of sunlight, and are, as a consequence, rather cold. But here again the artist's fingers will be restless to sketch an old bridge, a façade with unintelligible carvings, the old houses of the Place Fontaine, the gateway I have already mentioned and the castle that looks nervously down the valley seeing nothing but the sparkling, green perspective of the Roya.

There is good trout in that river. Wonderful trout. A fisherman could have the time of his life, and if he possess a stout pair of legs and a taste for romantic scenery, I can imagine no better region in the world for his seasonable leisure. For this, Breil is as good a centre as any other, and the little Hôtel de l'Union is acceptable. For that matter, one is rarely at a loss for decent accommodation in any village of south-east France, and particularly in the sub-Alpine and higher villages. Hospitality in most countries seems to improve as the altitude increases.

We retraced our steps to La Giandola and then continued along the right bank of the Roya, in the bed of which great, polished boulders have been deposited so

that the river is a succession of little white cascades set in the emerald green of unchecked waters. A boisterous, headlong stream, as its various names imply ; for it will answer to Roya, Rutula, Rotta, Radoria, Rodogia, Rudigia, Rovia, Rocra, Rodia—any name, it would seem, that signifies a roaring torrent. Its claim to be the most important river of the Maritime Alps is borne out conclusively by the record of history. From Otho to Napoleon it has aroused fierce animosities, until it seems to have acquired the very temper of a warrior.

The road presently shoots deep into the marvellous Gorge of Saorge, riding anxiously along the narrow projection betwixt the foaming bed of the river and the blue strip of sky overhead. Stonework rising here and there suggests a bridge, or probably an old aqueduct. Emerging from the gorge we mounted to the village of Saorge, leaving the Col de Raus route on our left.

The birds of the air are everywhere outdone in these hills. Nests were never more precariously set than in this black array of dwellings suspended between two rocky promontories like a collection of lacquer ornaments. It is the last French village of consequence—and of very considerable consequence ; for it commands the Roya valley, which is thus blocked effectually against encroachment from over the frontier. Italy possesses the lower, or Ventimiglian, and the upper third of this valley, but the possession by France of the middle bit, with Saorge cock-a-hoop on the top of it, nullifies to Italy the strategical importance of the other two-thirds.

The lords of Ventimiglia, and the branch of their family which ruled from Tenda, originally held the entire valley, but the middle bit separated itself in 1250, and went to the Counts of Provence ; Savoy got hold of it in 1388 and made it over to France in 1860. It is, therefore, an historical anomaly, but one which seems to have an unfortunate effect even in these days, for there

is little doubt that mutual suspicions are aroused by it and that, to give a practical instance, the long delay in bringing to Nice the railway that now connects Turin with Tenda is due to it. No matter. Those of us who love these glens and castled peaks do not shed tears for the absence of railways.

Saorge has a little Romanesque church, pleasantly old and dilapidated, with a six-storeyed campanile surmounted by an octagonal steeple. Architecturally there is nothing remarkable about it, but one readily falls in love with its air of informality and, as it were, its grandmotherly attitude towards the little town. But it is not the sole guardian of the piety of Saorge, for at the southern end of the village I came upon an agreeable Franciscan church, low and barnlike, with beautiful modern woodwork, which was at one time attached to a convent; and a little farther away is a chapel to the Madonna del Poggio, with some frescoes of no particular merit though the chapel is ranked as an historical monument.

The road now continued to Fontan, where passports were examined; and then threaded the beautiful gorge of Berghe, or Gauderena, from the centre of which, as one enters, there rises a tall rock covered in chestnut trees and supporting an old crenellated tower. The left side of the defile is like a wall of coloured marbles polished by falling waters and brilliantly reflecting what little sun can reach it. A wild, stimulating scenery all the way. I found it easy, at every stage of my journey, to think of these peaks and gorges in terms of the Middle Ages, for they seem so admirably suited to the popular conception of medieval circumstance. Sir Walter Scott or Browning would have been at home in these parts.

Emerging from the gorge we came to San Dalmazzo di Tenda. This is an agreeable hill station, with, I sup-

pose, the best hotel accommodation in this part of the Maritime Alps. It is only a couple of miles from Tenda, so that what is available from one is available from the other, and as centres for the district there is not much to choose between the two. There is, perhaps, a little more elegance at San Dalmazzo than at Tenda, and the hotel, built on the foundations of an Augustinian chartreuse, is very beautifully situated. Its cooking is, moreover, of quite excellent quality, though the air of these hills gives one an appetite that detects Lucullus in every host.

Not San Dalmazzo, however, but Tenda was my goal. As we rounded a twist in the road I saw it above us, congealed against a rocky hillside and overlooked by the stark, disfigured ruin of the ancient Lascaris château. A bell tolled from the little brown church, which I knew it to contain, but which was lost from view among the clustered dwellings. The tolling of the bell was a sweet sound, that fell through the valleys below and called the tired workman in from the fields and the pastures, for the night was falling. In the soft, warm light of that evening I came to my journey's end.

. . . . . .

The history of Tenda is largely the history of its counts ; and, for that matter, largely the history of all the medieval hill-towns—war, love, intrigue ; treacheries and alliances ; prosperity and plagues ; a colourful procession of pompous incident, broken at intervals by some circumstances of misery and ending at last in the pathetic tragedies of two old men—sole remnants of the counts of Tenda and Ventimille, whose forebear was Theodore Lascaris, Emperor of Byzance.

The history of this family is of unusual interest, but I shall only advert to some facts regarding two of them. The full story may be read in Geoffredo's *Storia delle Alpi Marittimi*, pages 593 *et seq.* The last of the race to bear

the title was Paul Augustine Lascaris, who fled the country in 1792, when all Liguria lay devastated by the infamous armies of the Revolution. The crippled count, an old man of seventy, had fled to a relative in Piedmont who nursed him in his illness.

In the middle of an unusually bitter winter he was summoned to return to Nice to show cause why his property should not be confiscated. Accordingly the aged count, suffering acutely, and denied any further extension of time, set out across the Col di Tenda, over a passage snow-ridden and swept by the icy winds of March. On arrival at Nice he begged the Republicans to kill him. Instead of that they tossed him from pillar to post in a farcical display of Republican justice in spite of the fact that four doctors, chosen by the court, had declared him unfit for travel.

At last the old man was forcibly put into a boat and despatched to La Cuse, then in Genoese territory, where death finally ended his unfortunate buffetings. His death, on foreign soil, had been the object sought by the Republican officers, who had refused to strike him off from the list of exiles because his estates were to be sold, his heirs being strangers living abroad, and therefore disinherited. The count's death at La Cuse enabled the sequestration to be made with some show of legality, although the conduct of the administration, each individual of which lined his own pockets, continued in the farcical sham with which the negotiations had opened.

Another scion of this great family, born at Nice in 1767, wore out his health in the service of Napoleon, in whose behalf he was despatched to Asia in a diplomatic capacity. After years of life among the uncivilized peoples of the East, and of herculean endeavour in the interests of his master and friend, he set out on the return to acquaint Napoleon with the results of his prolonged mission. Worn out in health he arrived at the Bosporus,

and there learned of the fatal disaster at Moscow. Presently the news came of his master's further misfortunes and final collapse. It proved too much for Lascaris. His mind was unable to bear the shock. All his brilliant strategy, his endurance of terrible hardship, his schemes and potential alliances, had gone for nought. Broken in health and spirit the old man returned to Cairo, and there died.

Looking at Tenda from a distance, as you mount from the Roya valley, you get the illusion of a small village hanging dizzily from clefts in the rock. But on arrival you are reassured. For one thing, it is quite a town, and for another there is no sense whatever of insecurity. Here are little piazze, a full-grown church, innumerable streets coiled around blocks of warmly-coloured houses, and an excellent albergo, the Nazionale, with a cheery little café adjoining, where the townsfolk play billiards, drink weak wine and, at evenings, chat dozily around a tall stove.

The principal attractions of the town, apart from its bracing climate, are situated round the corner from the Piazza Italia. You pass under one of the old gates and then reach the Piazza de Trabe. Halt a moment to observe here a beautiful doorway of the fourteenth century. A little further along is the Piazza del Ponte, with sad-shuttered palaces drooping over it, leaning under the weight of five hundred years. Hence runs the Via Cotta, to remind one that Giovanni Battista Cotta—one of the gallant and astonishingly numerous band of poet-patriots produced by Italy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—was born at Tenda. The house he occupied is number fourteen of the Via Cotta ; and some other old sixteenth century houses in this street should be looked for.

The other gate of Tenda, known as the Porta Nizza, is at the end of the Via Cotta, and if you walk on for

another five minutes and then look back you get a magnificent view of Tenda, grouped there in the shelter of Monte San Salvatore and dominating the valley of the Roya, herself dominated by the uprising derelict of the old Lascaris Castle. The castle has nothing to offer save reflections, and these are probably mournful; for a portion of the site is now occupied by the cemetery. But it must have been a very gallant affair in its day, judging from the old engraving which hangs on a wall of the Hotel Nazionale.

The castle was destroyed by the French in 1692, and only an enormous wall, about sixty feet high, remains. It is sometimes called the Castello Beatrice, after the beautiful and ill-fated Beatrice di Tenda, one of the Lascaris, who, when still very young, became the bride of Facino Cane, great condottiere and lord of Monferrato. Facino was killed at Pavia in 1412, and his widow was persuaded to marry Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, who desired Beatrice's wealth for the furtherance of his territorial ambitions. What he felt for his wife it is difficult to determine; for the charge of infidelity he brought against her was based on the flimsiest of evidence. She was accused of having taken as her lover Michele Orombello, a troubadour of Ventimille, and on this charge the miserable Filippo caused her to be beheaded in the Castle of Burasco, near Pavia, on the night of 14th September, 1418.

The collegiate church of San Salvatore has a beautifully grave façade in the Lombard style, with a richly carved portal. The severity of the interior is not unpleasing, but it is the chilliest church I have stood in. There are several tombs of the counts of Tenda, and in the Treasury are some richly brocaded vestments of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The priest is a kindly old man, who can be drawn out to give a long, quiet disquisition on the history of the church; and if he sees

that you are interested he will extract from some mysterious recess a volume of manuscript compiled by a learned predecessor. The manuscript traces the story of the countship and was apparently intended to be illustrated by some old prints which the author had collected, some of which, I doubt not, are extremely rare.

There are no pictures of any consequence in San Salvatore. But there are some frescoes not far from Tenda which are worth a great deal of effort to see. These are from the brush of Giovanni Canavesio of Pinerolo and adorn the fifteenth century church of the Madonna del Fontan at Briga. Briga lies about four miles from Tenda, reached by very pleasant paths. It has an old castle, several interesting façades and two churches, that of San Martino and that of the Madonna del Fontan.

Canavesio's frescoes at first are utterly bewildering. They cover 150 square metres of wall and include upwards of five hundred figures, all meticulously painted. Out of this host it is good to choose your favourites, and sit in contemplation of them; then to retire somewhat and enjoy the whole effect, which becomes startlingly clear and ordered. It is, of course, essentially decorative; at moments you feel the illusion of figures worked on tapestry, but out of the design come certain figures, certain groups, richer in colour than the rest, fuller of life, which arrest the attention. Among these is the Last Judgment, which is a little reminiscent of Orcagna's conception at the Campo Santo at Pisa; but the finest section is that portraying the Crucifixion, as brilliant a piece of grouping as I have seen.

I should like to visit Briga on the 15th of August, when the Madonna del Fontan is the object of a large pilgrimage. August is a good month to be in these parts, amid high prospects and a bracing climate, with many a hill-town close at hand—Piedmont a day's journey in

one direction, and the Riviera a day in the other. While, should one desire it, there is many a high peak to climb, and many a long, sunny walk to take. I foresee the day when great hotels will arise in these parts ; and already the way has been mapped for exploitation by a tourist motor-service. I suppose it is a pity : it is always a pity to surrender one's private possessions—for so the few of us who know this region regard it—to the world at large.

XV

A PIEDMONTESE ROUTE INTO FRANCE

RAMBLING, spacious and cool, the Piedmontese albergo is a heartening place. It is usually constructed of two, or perhaps three storeys, each of which is balconied, and slouches lazily around the four sides of a clean, cobbled courtyard. In the autumn months heavy clusters of grapes drip from the vines which overhang their stone arcades. Piles of vegetables, melons, monstrous fat pumpkins, like those of the Teatro dei Piccoli's delicious fancy, lurk glowingly in the cool shade; and suspended from the walls, like strings of barbaric orange beads, hang maize-cobs ripening in the sun.

Flinging wide the windows of your room at early morning, you look out to these jolly courtyards, with their colours, their odours, their bustle, and feel a wholesome warmth flow to your enamoured heart. The diligence horses are ready harnessed, and the stable-doors have opened to admit newcomers, early in with their masters from the out-lying fields, who would sell a pig, and with the profit therefrom buy shirts, a whip, a new piece of harness, and what else the little shops and stalls may decide for him. I tell you, there is joy in looking upon these things, the joy of colour and warmth and humanity.

One may indulge the joy, too, impersonally, among the girders and glassware of the Porta Nuova Station at Turin; but one tastes it in its fullness at Savigliano, a little over thirty miles away. Savigliano is hardly

worth more than a day when one knows what lies ahead, and its accommodation, acceptable enough, is not up to the standard of Piedmontese inns. For all that, it is a good introduction. The station lies outside the town, which shows that it knows its proper place ; and you walk across indifferent piazze and down indifferent streets, here and there enquiring the way to the centre, to the inevitable Romanesque forum surrounded by the aged and decrepit relics of half a thousand years. You pass beneath a drooping arch, and there it lies, the cobbled piazza silver grey, like the scales of a fish. Grouped around its four sides are the uneven façades of five centuries ago, angular and curved, flat-roofed and gabled, Gothic and Romanesque, a wavy, congealed parallelogram of brown and grey, slit unevenly with green-shuttered windows here sprawling squat in the subsidence of age, there aspiring in slender, perilous campanile, cut against the blue sky and blinking darkly with the hourly tolling from the belfry.

There is a busy movement along the silver-grey cobbles, betwixt the four wavy, brown walls ; for only such as you and I can afford to be idle in these little cities of Italy. The leisure of the townsfolk is at night, when cool shadows are like moss on the cobbles, and people saunter in groups of twos and threes, discussing the vintage, the new orders received at the railway-carriage works, the approaching confirmation by the Bishop of Fossano and what not of life's solemn circumstance. Oh ! There is much to talk about in little towns. You city folks, with your hourly editions of newspapers, your theatres and books, you are weary of each other's conversation when Signora Portinari, of Savigliano, has left unsaid the half of her important discourse to the neighbours.

The church of San Pietro, a bountiful structure, like

a barn, is cool and dark within. I entered it when the stone floor had been newly scrubbed, and, for sure, I would not exchange the smell of soap and water for costliest incense. The carven saints, all homely-looking folk, assented readily to my reflections. Here there are several pictures by Molinari, a native of the town, who flourished in the first half of the sixteenth century. Weak in drawing and rich in colour, they are suited to a dark interior whence their hues may glow diffusedly without reliance on form and design. That is why their effect, in a general way, is pleasing, though Molinari at best was only a second-rate artist. There is also an interesting triptych by Gandolfini, with a sweet-faced, haunting Madonna in the bluest of rich-blue shawls.

A search through the other churches revealed nothing of importance. In the Collegiate Church of St. Andrea is the tomb of Princess Isabella of Savoy-Carignano. In Santa Maria della Pieve there is an interesting Roman inscription and some fourteenth century paintings, which are pleasing enough. Paint, like wine, grows richer and more subtle with age. It is that indefinable quality which, in some degree, sends us for preference to old masters though design and drawing may be inferior to a modern. Savigliano also possesses several noteworthy palaces, such as the Asilo, formerly the Muratori, and quite a number of pleasant sixteenth and seventeenth century façades will be discovered in a walk through the old parts. One gets into the habit of treating these things too light-heartedly in the embarrassment of riches which Italy offers.

Meanwhile I take the little branch line that goes from Savigliano to Saluzzo, and keep my nose glued to the window of the carriage, with my eyes on the acres of maize, and vines, and olives in the flats, and on the hill-slopes chastened through generations into niggard

terraces of soil, not over-fruitful, but enough for the wants of a simple peasantry. Presently Saluzzo is discerned, climbing the slopes of a far-seeing hill, clawing the rugged sides, and finally sprawling on its summit with a handful of towers held towards the sun. In the distance could be seen the snow-clad Alps, washed by recent rains.

Salve caro deo tellus : thus I cry with Petrarch as I gaze upon beloved Italy ; a corner of Italy which has borne itself with decorum and grace through all the changing circumstance of generations, cradling and nurturing the movement which gave back to Italy her soul and her destiny. Through all this she has contrived to maintain in her hills and valleys the calm beauty and dignity of a hardy race to whom the fruits of the earth are yielded only after grim and sustained toil. Westwards a few miles from Turin and you are half-way up the Alps : there is still the warmth of Italy, still the southward-leaning vines : but ever present is the rigour of the hills, and the watching eye of the Alps.

I remind myself that this is true. But this joyous town has forgotten the rigours : let the peasant on the terraced slopes, with his fork and his hoe, be mindful of that ; but not us of Saluzzo. For us the warmth, the chatter, the laughter, the jingling of spurs from the feet of gallant officers, and of glasses in the hands of pretty girls ; the antics of street-acrobats in the piazza which faces the cathedral, the capering of tame, wistful-faced bears, the melodies of Verdi and Rossini, the gay, brave jingoism of black-shirted boys, and the joy, the splendour, the frolic of life, which even the dogs in the street may participate in with as much abandon as the soldiers from the castle-cum-barracks on the hill.

It is all very warm and heartening, and the stranger is foolish who avoids it. It is a feature of Saluzzo which makes the object of the tourist an easy one, and invests

THE TOWN OF FOIX IS DOMINATED BY AN ISOLATED ROCK CROWNED BY THE TOWERS OF A FEUDAL CASTLE.

LE EAUX-BONNES, ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE RESORTS IN THE PYRENEES, MAINTAINS AN ATMOSPHERE OF ELEGANT SECLUSION.

the little city with a gracious humanity. The russet tone of the pseudo-Gothic Duomo, the worn steps of which debouch to a union with the cobbles of the piazza; the maze of ancient lanes which climb to the castello; the little churches, which look like mahogany curios from a Brobdignagian cabinet of antiquities; the palaces, with their faded extra-mural frescoes and embroideries of marble—these things redouble their effect of beauty under the influence generated by the people of Saluzzo.

So: we rise early. The sun streams through the open windows. The gallery overlooking the courtyard is hung with washing which we negotiate with difficulty on our way to a hearty breakfast. Over our eggs and coffee we discuss with the proprietor our day's plans, and take a word of advice. It matters not that neither plans nor advice are followed throughout the day. Sufficient that they lend an added interest to our breakfast. From the bookshop next door we purchase a little monograph on Saluzzo, running to 200 closely-packed pages, and that is all we need in the way of a guide. The day begins with our resolutions to see much. Every day at Saluzzo begins like that, just as it ends with having seen very little and dreamed much.

The hotel is in the lower part of the town, and so is the cathedral. It is therefore convenient to start there, glancing first at the statue of Silvio Pellico, poet and patriot, who was born in Saluzzo in 1788, and, with other Italian patriots, suffered imprisonment by the Austrians in the Fortress of Spielberg. I remember a tablet to his honour on the portal of the Palazzo di Giustizia in Milan. His finest work is Mie Prigioni, though other pieces have a greater fervour. His song, burdened with the wars of his beloved Italy, was the song of the troubadour, and one reflects that his family had a Provençal origin. *Francesca*, his first

important work, was translated by Byron. It is, however, the combination of poet and patriot, with long imprisonments to his record, endured for love of country, that keeps Silvio's name green in Italy to-day.

Overshadowing Pellico's monument is the Cathedral of Saluzzo, which was commenced in 1491 and completed ten years later. Though severely simple in its general outline, it is one of the most pleasing churches I know of. One would almost call it a peasant-cathedral, for it has a distinct air of rusticity enhanced by the soil-brown hue of its façade. The graceful octagonal campanile at the rear seems a little too slender for its massive parent. Inside there is much pomp and one or two lovely pictures; above all a triptych of Saints Cosima and Damiano, picked out in reds and blues as with crushed rubies and sapphire. The authorship is unknown. The altar of San Giuseppe is an excellent piece of Renaissance work attributed, wrongly I think, to Sanmicheli.

After the Cathedral, San Giovanni; but the sequence is only for convenience. Let me say at once that San Giovanni is one of the most precious things in all Piedmont. The climb to it—by a roundabout way, for there is no need to hurry—well predisposes your mind for the acceptance of its beauty. The narrow, aspiring lanes, beset on both sides by ancient, overhanging houses, bid you tarry at a dozen points. You cannot, for example, resist loitering a moment to peep through the grating of a wall at a convent enclosure. A radiant little square of green lawn and flowers is overhung by a Gothic loggia on which are traces of fresco, and through the little pointed doorway children troop in solemn pairs, garbed in the pretty, formal robes of charity. The gate in the wall is opened wide and the children march out, with a sweet-faced sister

at their head, while a little bell, from behind the Gothic loggia, tolls sleepily.

A little farther and you halt beneath the overhanging eves of a thirteenth century house. It has doubtless served at one time as a chapter house. The heavy oaken door, sadly eaten away, is carved with more saints than I care to tell, and so sadly disfigured that even if I cared I could not. Yonder, a step or two, is an old palace, bright even in this day with its exterior wall-paintings which at one time charmed the eye of Margherita of Foix. I have been to Foix; and I feel, as I look on this palace, that Margherita would have loved Saluzzo as fervently as she did her Pyrenean home.

Margherita was wont to pray in the church of San Giovanni. She had need of her prayers if the gossips of the time are to be believed. Many were the whispers, discreet and indiscreet, that passed among the balconies of the upper town, coupling the beautiful marchesa, wife of Ludovico II., with young Cavazza, a member of one of Saluzzo's greatest families, whose house, the Casa Cavazza, of the fifteenth century, is still a delight in Saluzzo. Margherita had other ambitions besides. Her aim to secure complete control of the marquisate, after Ludovico's death, precipitated endless strife, but in her brief power she at least secured from Pope John II. the establishment of an episcopal see at Saluzzo.

All these circumstances delay San Giovanni, which you come upon unexpectedly at the end of a narrow lane and then through a subsiding archway. You would hardly know there was a church at all if it were not for the delicate campanile thrusting up through a tangle of roofs to the clear sky. That is half the charm. It preserves to the church its old, secluded air of monasticism, and makes it the more delightful because it comes as a surprise. In style, San Giovanni is French-Gothic, though it dates itself in pieces. The nave is

from somewhere about 1320, the campanile from 1377, and the raised choir from nearly a century later. The lords of Saluzzo, who are buried within, took a paternal interest in the church, and tampered with it at their discretion. That is a pity from the strictly architectural point of view, though we readily forget that in admiration of its effect pictorially and in detail.

I do not propose to describe the interior with the fulness it unquestionably deserves. I do but suggest that here is material enough for many an hour's profitable browsing. There are tombs, with beautiful effigies by the lesser masters (often more pleasing and tender than their more widely-known brethren) of the Lombard School, and frequent examples of exquisite foliage carvings. The beautiful Chapel of San Sepolcro, ill-served by its modern windows, is a gracious storehouse of carved treasure far outshining the rest of the church and, in its luxury, contrasting strangely with the austere sanctity of the main building.

One goes first to the tomb of Ludovico II., which is probably by Benedetto Briosco. Ludovico is represented in the serene placidity of his last sleep, quiet and refreshed, with his hands crossed in the conventional manner of Christian art. A grave, thoughtful face has this Marquis of Saluzzo, and doubtless in life there was time for gravity and thought, though one hardly expects it of a powerful medieval lord. Below the effigy are sculptured seven pleasing figures representing seven virtues, and an oval space bears the inscription :

ILLVSTRISSIMO . AC . EXCELLENTISSIMO PRINCIPI . DOMINO LVDOVICO MARCHIONI . SALUCIARUM . VICEREGI NEAPOLITANO . CONIVGI BENEMERENTI . EXCELLENTISSIMA PRINCIPISSA DOMINA . MARGARITA DI FVXO . PVDICITIAE . CORONAM . DEFERENS . PIENTISSIME . POSVIT.

Gossips, as I have already indicated, do not agree

with that assertion of Margherita's fidelity, and it matters little in these days. Nor is it possible to seek confirmation or denial of the story in the lady's face; for that no longer exists. The carved niche prepared to receive her body is empty, for, contrary to her wish, Margherita was buried in Spain. The moulding of the arches, in this and the opposite tomb, is of marvellous perfection, and the traceries are as delicate as webs. Possibly the work on both canopies was done by the same artist, and, as Benedetto Briosco was entrusted with the entire adornment of the chapel, perhaps we are justified in attributing to him the authorship of these delicate shrines.

The same hand, or at all events the same influence, is detected in the exquisite little holy water stoup, originally designed as a *lavabo*. A double order of small pilasters flank it, and each of these is intersected about half way up by a bracket. The bracket is supported by a caryatid and surmounted by a pyramidal canopy, with panels, counterposts and cusps, the whole a miracle of delicate embroidery. Equally delicate is the little shrine of the Thorn, with a canopy like the enlarged crown of a particularly well-favoured fairy princess. The holy relic, a thorn from the crown placed derisively upon Christ's head, was presented to Tommaso III. during his visit to Charles VI. in Paris, but was afterwards stolen by a rival town.

Whenever I think of Saluzzo my mind goes first to this delicate chapel of St. Sepulchre, with its carven marble and stone in designs which seem rather to have been woven than chiselled, its grave and rested figure of Ludovico, there in the midst of precious shrines, though parted from the spouse in whom he possessed a faith not shared by his successors. I only hope that Saluzzo will take a little more care of its rare heritage—too many statuettes are gone, too many leaves are broken

and impious hands have been too often, and rudely, upon the gracious effigy of Ludovico.

It is a step from San Giovanni to the beautiful Palazzo del Commune, where one lingers over old frescoes ; and a step thence to the castle, which is now used as a prison, and looks it. Close by there is an ornate church in red-brick, raised in honour of S. Nicola, amiable enough, but one of a thousand in Lombardy and Piedmont. Near it is another church, its façade unhappily painted to represent what it might have been if the original builders had had their fling. It is well they did not. A narrow lane leads thence to the top of a hill, which gives a very agreeable prospect of tilled valleys and castle-topped peaks.

You see plainly the castle of Verzuolo, rising from a green wood on an isolated hill, with such happy effect of romance that you register a vow to walk to it. The way lies by a sanctuary littered with votive offerings, and then out through the fields, where the stranger is subjected to a disconcerting scrutiny from cows, pigs, dogs, sparrows and the children that cluster numerously at the gates of farm-houses. But you keep plodding on, and luck is with you if you come upon the castle—unawares, for it hides itself until the very last minute—when the sun has declined behind Monte Viso.

There is something unreal about this castle. There it lies, its tower rising from a mass of glowing red stone, and the whole traceried structure gilded with light. Fairy-like and exquisite it is, grouped there against the purple hills, rising to be silhouetted against the white walls of a distant snowy peak, and all the soft lights of the setting sun concentrated through an alpine pass to fall upon this lonely, hushed, and uncertain castle. In the full light of day it is not quite so ethereal,

but is still one of the most romantic castles of Piedmont.

There are many little walks like that, to be had from Saluzzo, and diligence rides to the oddest of old-fashioned towns—to Manta, which also has a castle, delightfully frescoed; to high-perched Castigliole-Saluzzo, and the beautiful façades of Revello; to Staffarda's famous abbey and the ancient little town of Villanovetta. Then you will say adieu to Saluzzo and shift your headquarters to Cuneo, with its boulevards, and its wide, flowery corso that lies in full gaze of the high Alps. There you join up with the route into Nice, which I have already described, though in a reverse direction.

XVI

THE CIRQUE DE TROUMOUSE

I BEGIN this little journey from Luz, because that is a typical Pyrenean town and a very good centre for Gavarnie, Troumouse and Barèges. Gavarnie and Barèges, well known by travellers in the Pyrenees, I shall pass by. For me the quieter, lovelier, catastrophe of Troumouse, up those paths that call for hardihood and steady nerves, those strange, tormented paths, which writhe through some of the noblest glories of the Pyrenees, and do not hesitate to halt here and there to tell a story of strange, medieval doings.

But first of all I am at Luz, amid light and warmth, and feel disposed to pass on a few words concerning it. Luz means light ; and this is how that name is explained. In olden days it lay in the passage of Spanish smugglers and bandits who came through the arid mountain passes that give on to Aragon. Their route was chiefly through that Brèche de Roland, so-called from the legend that Roland here smote the mountain top with his fabulous sword, and so cleaved a pass. The bandits, terrified by the gloom and chaos of Gavarnie and its neighbouring gorges, would presently discern, far below them, a dazzling white light and a gracious village of sunshine and tranquillity. And ever afterwards that little village became, in the minds of those hardy adventurers, synonymous with light.

Even to one who comes not through such arid defiles, the name of the village is amply justified. For it is truly a lightsome place, full of gay, simple circumstance, with the air of a refuge from that turmoil which the surround-

ing mountains draw to their mysterious bosoms. And, in its Church of St. John it possesses one of the most picturesque ecclesiastical buildings in the High Pyrenees. The church was erected by the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with crenellated walls and towers in the manner of a Syrian stronghold; influence, one gathers, of the Hospitallers' sojourn in the Holy Land. It is, of course, a round church, but its aspect is more of a fortress than of a church. The ramparts are connected with the main structure by a tower on the north side, which rises above the very interesting twelfth century portal; another tower adjoins the apse. On the southern side is a large sixteenth century chapel.

Here you come upon evidence of that mysterious Pyrenees sect known as Cagots. For in the church of Luz there is a small entrance which was built especially for these people. What they were, who they were, or whence they came I cannot tell. Nobody seems to know. In their day they were so utterly shunned that not even an explanation of their name has survived; nor any reason why they were segregated from the rest of humanity and treated as unclean. The usual theory is that the Cagots were returned Crusaders afflicted by some leprous disease; and that seems the most probable explanation.

There is a pretty little place, now practically a suburb of Luz, where people resort to bathe in warm, sulphurous springs. This is St. Sauveur. The story is told that one of these springs, now sealed up, once achieved an embarrassing fame. It appears that a young shepherdess, Hélène de la Boubère, lamenting the fact that she had not given a child to her husband, was visited by a fairy who advised her to bathe in a spring at St. Sauveur. Hélène obeyed the injunction, with very satisfactory results; for presently she gave birth to as fine a set of twins as you could see in all the Pyrenees.

Hélène, of course, could not be expected to keep silent, and presently an endless stream of women from the neighbouring valleys passed through the waters of St. Sauveur. The spring was unfailing, and its popularity became so great that the authorities were ultimately compelled to close it. It is still called La Source des Dames, but may only be visited by special permission.

Now I pass on from Luz. Other tourists are passing the same way; for my road, as far as Gèdre, is that which leads to Gavarnie. But at Gèdre I shall part from them; and the rest of the way will assuredly be my own. How very pleasant is this road as it ascends the valley of the Gave de Pau. The hardy ponies which draw my carriage are accustomed to the toil, and I sway gently, ever mounting, an immaculate sky above and the infinite mystery of the mountains ahead. On the right are the bold outlines of the *Pont Napoléon*, so-called in honour of the third Napoleon's visit, with his empress.

Now we climb the eastern flank of the Pic de Bergons, and thread a rocky gorge which culminates in a fine cascade frothing beneath the Pic Barbe de Bouch. A little bridge leads over the Gave and the way lies through another gorge, and over yet another bridge, to Pragnères. Always there is the sound of water, and the distant, strange hum of the mountains; and the gradual approach, through an ever-increasing accumulation of twisted and grotesque rocks, to the vast, ascending walls of the High Pyrenees. Peak after peak is discerned, growing nearer and nearer, and Roland's breach—the passage through centuries of soldier, bandit, smuggler—is seen on the right as we rattle slowly into Gèdre.

No need to say much concerning Gèdre, which lies at the confluence of the Gave de Pau and the Gave d'Héas. The Hôtel de la Grotte could be worse, and has the advantage of supplying anything you need in the way of guides, mules, or ponies. For the journey on to the

Cirque de Troumouse you may not need these aids. I do not know. You must consult your own ability as a walker and pathfinder, in the knowledge that that need only be fair unless fog threatens. In that case you will do well to wait a day, or to borrow the services of a guide. Let me say, however, that the track is not good. Unless walking is a passion with you, you will do well to sit astride a mule. After all, a mule in the mountains is an appropriate beast. It adds to the sense of adventure.

Here, then, we bid farewell to our orthodox friends who are following the well-beaten path to Gavarnie. Not that I wish to be scornful of the famous Cirque. It is undoubtedly marvellous. But it is utterly impossible to be alone there. On the other hand, the Cirque de Troumouse, in addition to the interesting route thither, has the advantage of complete and sublime solitude ; a composure at once awful and serene ; and a strange, marvellous diversity which Gavarnie lacks.

Now let us be off. The road goes past the church of Gèdre and presently reveals a pathway to the left. This is followed along the left bank of the Gave d'Héas, through a rocky wilderness known as the Peyrade de Benqué. Presently the stream is crossed by a little wooden bridge, about two miles up from the commencement of the path, and the way continues up the right bank of the Gave, through a region where great quantities of rare saxifraga flourish.

Presently is seen the opening of the Vallée d'Estaubé, giving on to a semi-circle of jagged precipices, dominated by two savage glaciers. A cascade is passed, and the adventurous will doubtless attempt to gather some of the edelweiss that grows in the vicinity, but the rocks are shockingly deceptive, and a great deal of luck is needed to avoid an annoying slip. Better leave such heroism until another time, when there is not a long, and fairly trying, journey ahead.

Ascending from the Héas road we enter and traverse the Peyrade d'Héas, called in the language of the country *l'Araye*, that is to say, *l'arrachement*, a name which, however, more particularly applies to a vast rock which dominates the whole of this area. It is generally called the *Caillou de l'Araillè*, and is surmounted by a statue of the Virgin. It has an interesting legend, which is worth the telling, but it must wait until Héas is reached ; for the legend is greatly concerned with that little village, which lies, now, only a short walk away.

Here also, at Héas, there are passable inns, which supply mules and guides. It is a very small, and apparently insignificant hamlet, of which the principal feature is the chapel, situated by the meagre waters of the Gave. It is constructed in the form of a Greek cross surmounted by a small dome, and is of comparatively recent date. Not older, I should say, than the early nineteenth century, though clearly on the site of a much earlier church. There is, for example, a document at Luz which establishes the evidence of a chapel at Héas in 1415, the gift of the Seigneur of Sère, who also contracts to supply to the Hospice of Our Lady of Héas a yearly tribute of wheat.

Over many centuries it has been a celebrated place of pilgrimage, and an interesting legend has arisen about it. It is said that three shepherds were possessed of the urge to raise on this spot a chapel to the Virgin, who, says an old work, " naturally applauded this act of faith." The shepherds were without any sustenance except their boundless piety, and the Virgin thereupon despatched three goats, every day, to nourish them with milk.

The goats were always accompanied by their kids, a circumstance which presently brought about the undoing of the shepherds' noble task. Not unnaturally, these pious men grew covetous of the young kids. The sixth capital sin developed in their breasts, and they plotted

to kill and eat one of the animals. The goats, however, not being ordinary goats, discovered the impious plan and resolved to abandon their task, leaving the shepherds to hunger and their own sad reflections. Driven by the need of food they descended into the plain, and the divine work remained unfinished.

Another tradition attributes the foundation of the chapel to a priest who belonged to a noble family of Luz. He, too, was fortified by divine intervention, which came in the shape of two doves of dazzling whiteness. For a long time these birds flew steadily above the peak of Mont d'Aguila. Then came a day when they separated, one of them flying to the spot where rose the chapel of Héas, and the other performing a similar mission on an isolated hillock which overlooks the village of Arrens. In this latter place rose the chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Pouey-la Houn. Shortly afterwards there was found, again by shepherds, a statue of the Virgin resting by the edge of the Gave. This was placed in the chapel of Héas, which therefore became a centre of marvel and miracles.

So great was the renown of Our Lady of Héas that the people of Luz became jealously incensed, and resolved to rid their village of this powerful rival. A number of daring spirits formed a plot, and, stealing away one dark and stormy night, crossed the rocky wilderness, where lay so many snares, to Héas. Their impious intrepidity succeeded. The statue was removed from its pedestal and carried stealthily back to Luz, where it was placed in the fortified church which seemed to the people of Luz a more appropriate theatre for miraculous activity.

But, foolish people, they had reckoned without their host. The day after the second night, when they entered the big, gloomy church, lo! the Virgin was no longer there. She had passed out of Luz and had crossed the stony wilderness back to Héas, her true home. Now

comes the great stone into our story, the great stone called Caillou de l'Araillé, which we have already observed. The statue in its flight from the captivity of Luz, chose this stone to rest upon, and so endowed it with a sanctity the neighbouring shepherds were quick to appreciate ; for presently they built a chapel there, to mark for all time their beloved Lady's halting-place. (Another story says that a quite separate statue of the Virgin descended from heaven and lodged on this stone, and that some shepherds, observing it, hastily built a chapel round it.)

Whilst on the subject of this stone, I would recall another circumstance connected with it. Over a century ago a project was formed to remove this monolith to Paris, to form the base of a monument to be erected to the murdered Duke of Berry. It will be remembered that the Duke of Berry was the younger son of Charles X of France and was born at Versailles on the 24th of January 1778. He served for some time in the Russian army, and later took up his residence in England where he remained for thirteen years, contracting during that period a marriage with an English lady.

For political reasons the marriage was annulled in 1814, when the Duke returned to France, there to gain some prestige among his countrymen. Movements then existed to restore this agreeable prince to the throne of France, but that plan was frustrated on the night of 13th February, 1820, by an assassin who mortally wounded him as he was leaving the opera-house with his second wife, Princess Caroline Ferdinande Louise of Naples.

His followers apparently gave much thought to the enormity of the crime, and cast about for something fitting to commemorate it. Finally, by what devious route I know not, their gaze alighted on this lonely, arid field of rocks in the heart of the Pyrenees, and was brought to rest on the famous Caillou. This, at last, was a fitting pedestal for the monument our loyal visionaries

dreamed of. Heaven knows how they proposed to transport it to Paris, even assuming the consent of the people over whom, for centuries, it had spread its benediction. The Virgin on the summit smiled. The wits of Paris echoed and embellished the smile. And the plan vanished.

Certain scholars in the past have seen a druidical significance in the great stone, placing its formation long before the cataclysm of 1650, which is generally supposed to have deposited it here. It is easy to form these theories, and sufficiently romantic. Druidesses, with long, waving hair, crowned with the oak garland and brandishing gold sickles in their pale hands, make a pretty picture. And still the Virgin on the Caillou's summit smiles.

Now let me return to Héas. I have been too long absent. A register has been preserved confirming the foundation at Héas, by the prior Pierre de la Barrière, of a confraternity in honour of the Virgin ; and the register carries on the record until 1792. The Revolution swept it away, and it was never again revived, but the church was once more devoted to worship, and the pilgrimages were resumed with all their ancient fervour. These pilgrimages take place twice yearly, on the 15th of August and again on the 8th of September, when a large, motley crowd streams through the passes to the little hamlet in the midst of the stony desert.

Hither come curious visitors from St. Sauveur and Barèges mixing with the true sons of the hills ; and pious worshippers from Spain jostling with those of Bigorre. They gather round the chapel and then proceed to the miracle rock. The statue is placed in one of the four chapels formed by the four arms of the Greek cross. It is carved of wood, cloaked with a gilt mantle, and crowned with the red hood of Bigorre, and is altogether one of the most picturesque Virgins you could

wish to see. There is also a small terra-cotta statue exhibited only at pilgrimage time, and another, much mutilated one, of white marble.

The primitive pictures on the walls of the church will occasion some amusement; but the church is, on the whole, very pleasing.

The halt at Héas has been long, but not too long. You must be grateful for these stories of the Pyrenees as they come, because they do a fine service in lightening the rigours of the journey, and explaining the character of the people bred in these fastnesses. The ancient legends and ritual of the people have been faithfully guarded by the mountains, and so much the better. By their aid, and their very substantial influence, we are brought to another world, and the sojourn does us no harm. God bless the folk of these mountains! May the Virgin of Héas wield for ever her gentle sceptre, spreading solace through the austere valleys of Hautes Pyrénées.

Allons! Let us pay for our bock and shoulder knapsacks once again. Opposite a barn we cross to the left bank of the stream and climb to the foot of the precipice of Mont Herrand. On the way there are gracious meadows, with herds of mules feeding placidly. The grass looks so green and shiny, with the sun upon it, that one would fain hesitate there, to lie in the warmth. Perhaps it is a desire kindled by the bock consumed at Héas. The track picks its way among rocks along the stream of the Maillet, and crossing this we are at last, at breathless last, in the vast, moody, magnificent Cirque de Troumouse!

It would be proper, I suppose, to describe my sensations on entering this vast amphitheatre. I wish I could. First let us pick our way about until a true vantage-point is reached, and there, in peace and silence, let us look upon these marvels, hidden in the wild recesses of the Pyrenees. First, then, there is observed in the middle of

THE CIRQUE DE GAVARNIE IS A MAGNIFICENT NATURAL AMPHITHEATER FORMED BY LIMESTONE MOUNTAINS RISING TO A HEIGHT OF NINE THOUSAND FEET.

GEDRE IS TYPICAL OF THE CHARMING SMALL VILLAGES THAT DOT THE VALLEYS OF THE PYRENEES.

the amphitheatre, a turfy knoll from which rises Our Lady of the Snows. Progressing hence, northwards from the statue, we come to another little knoll which reveals a lovely view of the valley of Héas, dominated by a prodigious monolith called the Tour de Liensaoube, as if it were a guardian of the mysterious recesses of the Cirque.

Leaving the statue on the left, a path winds uncertainly through grass towards the south-east. The stream of the Cot is crossed on stepping stones, and the way then lies eastward towards the Sisters of Troumouse, two equal cones which rise side by side, above a mass of wreckage, and at the foot of the Cirque's vertical face. Presently, from the summit of a small hill, you look down into a little tarn, silent, and glossed over by the pent-in light of noon; and there below you, in all its wild, quivering grandeur, lies the vast amphitheatre, which, it has been said, could hold some forty millions of people.

The Cirque de Troumouse swings in a noble semi-circle, in extent not less than five miles. Like watch-towers rising at each end, stand Mont Herrand on the one side and Mont d'Aguila on the other, connecting a wall of smooth, sheer rock. From the centre of this crescent is uplifted the vast Pic de Troumouse; its sides riven by fierce glaciers that have bitten deeply into its flanks; and the conical twin sisters of Troumouse, like bastions defending the entrance to this enormous colosseum of nature.

I would say a word on the colours. Deep, fresh green is in the depths. It is the green of an earth that has preserved the freshness of its origin, when all the Cirque was a sheet of primeval waters. Of that lake there is left but a little tarn, blue and sweet, like a benevolent eye. Soft, turfy knolls rise at intervals, sharply contrasting with the wreckage of cyclopean monoliths that lie burning in the sun; and that bare, deserted circle of

precipices that hems them in. Along those vast walls there quiver a thousand gradations of light and shade —purple, rose, gold, violet, flame-colour, traced out with lines of blue-black and indigo, and culminating in a sharp line that cuts into the blue of the over-arching sky.

Down below there are grazing flocks and herds, among the grass and the flowers. You are surprised? Yet how it warmed my heart to see them, so contentedly there, amid all this majesty, a happy reminder of life and little things, a sweet recall to the joyous pettiness of our minute existence. It may sound odd, and doubtless is worse than that, but it seemed to me that those grazing flocks and herds served to spiritualize the vast immensity of the Cirque. I should like to delve within the mind of the shepherd there, who spends all his life in this vivid theatre, accompanied only by his long-legged, somewhat ferocious dog. Has all this majesty, this evidence of something vastly catastrophic, any influence upon his mind . . . ? I can fancy that Virgin of the Caillou smiling once again, as I ponder thus, ineffectually, over her subject.

If, at the end of this, there is adventure still in your breast, and leather on your shoes, you may choose to take the path which goes on from the Cirque, past some *cabanes*, and across a small glacier. There is then a steep and hazardous ridge down into the Spanish valley of Pinède, ending up in Bielsa. Along this way you will come upon some very striking features, and discover a form of the Pyrenees to which you are unaccustomed. Here the valleys are frequently ravines in the true sense of the word, corresponding to what, in America, is generally understood by canyons.

If you attempt anything of this sort you are beyond the range of my advice. I bid you adieu and wish you well; for I purpose to return the way I came, to eat a good meal in Gèdre and to sleep on a comfortable bed.

XVII

ST. JEAN-PIED-DE-PORT TO MAULÉON

ST. JEAN-PIED-DE-PORT is a gracious little town, sleepy, tumble-down and Spanish in appearance. In recent years it has become popular as a summer resort, and it is certainly an excellent little centre from which to make easy and interesting excursions. It is a pleasant run from Biarritz via Bayonne if by rail, and via Cambo if by road. The road journey is very beautiful, and extends for a matter of sixty kilometres. Both routes pass within easy distance of the famous Pas-de-Roland.

It is not my intention to talk much of St. Jean-Pied-de-Port and its beautiful neighbourhood. I am using it only as a starting point for the visit to Mauléon. But it is worth adding that such very delightful places as Roncesvalles, Burguete and Pamplona are only a day's journey away. Valleys, hills and little old towns are everywhere, there are plenty of good roads and good inns, and a continuous stream of historic reminiscence. And the air of St. Jean-Pied-de-Port is so invigorating that one is ready always for the happy rigours of a day's journey.

That is how I felt as I rose on a crisp morning and set out for Mauléon. St. Jean was still half-asleep. I doubt if it is ever properly awake. The flowers in little courtyards waved a delicious morning scent into the air, washed clean by the night dews. The sound of tiny asses, laden with their early freight of wood, bread, fruit and what not, as they clattered up the cobbled roads was like the slow, awakening castanets of a dancer. Against

the white, lounging walls, the sun lay flat and warm, and the street dogs, stretching themselves and barking lazily at nothing in particular, betrayed the only exertion the day would call from them.

Fifteen minutes after I had left the Place du Marché I was munching ham rolls in a little train. In a moment we crossed the Nive de Laurhibar. The sight of the Laurhibar valley arouses the desire to follow it, at least as far as Laurhibar, and this we may do from St. Jean-le-Vieux, the first stopping-place. It is only a matter of four kilometres from St. Jean-Pied-de-Port to St. Jean-le-Vieux, and I regretted that I had not come this far by road. It is an easy, pleasant walk, and just far enough, on a cool morning, to bring warmth and vigour to one's limbs. Moreover, in such a walk, at such an hour, one is assured of company, the pleasant company of peasant-folk, with ass or pony, pigs or chickens, who greet you kindly.

St. Jean-le-Vieux, as its name implies, is very old. As you enter its sleepy streets you get the impression of something not only old, but beyond the age of caring ten cents what happens to it. Probably it has never been very interested in its own existence, and the result is that we, who visit it, are ourselves unable to evince much curiosity. Frankly, it is a dull little place, with little to show for the many centuries through which it has passed, from the time when a Roman fort and depot stood there, at which Charlemagne rested.

In the small square there is a stone market cross of unknown date. It succeeds in giving some small measure of character to this part of the town. The only feature of real consequence left is the church, with a very beautiful Romanesque portal, carved strangely at the capitals. The church was restored in 1630, but the interior contains nothing of interest beyond the ancient holy-water stoup. In the streets of the town there are

one or two old Romanesque houses, pleasant enough to look upon, as old houses always are; but my most desirable memory of St. Jean-le-Vieux is the sun which warmed me through as I sat taking coffee in the sleepy square.

On this occasion it was not my intention to follow down the valley of Laurhibar; but I cannot pass from St. Jean-le-Vieux without a few comments upon the pleasant things that extend from its doors. There are good roads along the valley, easy enough to pick out, and gracious to tread. First to the right out of the square is the road that leads to Bussunarits. You go through an avenue of fine chestnut trees, that are like green clouds, and across a stone bridge that spans the mountain-fed stream.

Here is a spot to halt at; to halt at for hours amid a cool, refreshing beauty of flowers, streams, meadows, trees and fine vistas of tall peaks. Bussanarits is only a little village; but not far away is the splendid eleventh century Château of Sarrasquette, its old walls and towers a fine, romantic landmark amid the green fertility of the valley. Here and there, as you continue, you may climb to some vantage-point, where the view embraces leagues of mountain-land and valley, ever dominated by the point of Béhorléguy.

You come to little villages like Ahaxe, with a tall walnut tree rising from the centre of the square, near a large cross. The odd little church, more like a barn than a church, pokes up irregularly into the warm sun, and you feel some gracious communion with the tranquil folk who attend to their simple tasks throughout the village. These Basque villages have something almost elemental about them. Odd and angular, they have a curious strength, a little, one might say, of the strength that is revealed by a Gauguin picture.

And at nights they have an almost eerie beauty.

Under the light of the moon their prevailing colours are purple and pale orange and their shapes are grotesque, losing all their angularity, and acquiring a series of thick, swinging curves, even as the curves of the dark, uprising mountains that encircle them.

Not far from Ahaxe, on the main road, are grouped together two or three houses. Into the wall of one of these houses has been let two tablets bearing Latin inscriptions. With difficulty you may decipher this much :

ISTA . CAPELANIA . S
ANCITA . FUIT . A . GUILL
ERMO . DE . CURUCHET . A
NNO . DOMINI . 1671 . CUI
US . SUMMA . PRINCIPALIS .
EST . TER . SEPTEMILLIA . LI
BRARUM . MINISTER . HUIUS . CA
PELANIE . TENEBITUR . CELEB
RARE . MISSAM . OMNIBUS . DI
EBUS . ET . ETIAM . INSTRUE
RE . OMNES. CUI . ILLUC . ACC
ESSERINT . DISCENDI . CA
USA . DOCTRINAM.

ADDO . 2000 . LIBRAS . OPTANDO . EX
EARUM . FLORE . CELEBRETUR .
SINGULIS . DIEBUS
VENERIS . UNA . MISSA
IN . OPEM . ANIMARUM
IN . PURGATORIO . EXISTENT
IUM . ANNO . 1675.

This could be translated as follows : " This chaplaincy was founded by William de Curuchet in 1671, of which the capital is twenty-one thousand pounds. The priest of this chaplaincy will be bound to celebrate mass every day and likewise to instruct all who may resort thither for the purpose of learning (Christian) doctrine."

"I add two thousand pounds, wishing that out of the revenue one Mass may be celebrated every Friday for the succour of souls in purgatory. In the year 1675."

But of the chapel nothing is left save these stones.

My digression, along the valley of the Laurhibar, has not brought with it a train of historical notes or of romantic antiquities. For, indeed, the great charm of the valley is its natural beauty, strengthened by such small circumstance as an isolated Basque farmhouse, a village, or a group of peasants. For all that, it is a memorable journey: and when you know the country of the Basques you will realize why.

Now I am back at St. Jean-le-Vieux, eager to continue to Mauléon. The road leaves the Nive and rises to a little plateau, whence it continues, pleasantly rising and falling, to Larceveau, passing Lacarre. At Lacarre, an eleventh century castle demands a moment, first because it is an interesting old building, well-restored, and secondly because it is here that Maréchal Harispé lived and died.

Harispé led a regiment of Basques in the service of the Emperor Napoleon. On the morning before the battle of Jena Napoleon, passing by the regiment, remarked:

"You have a beautiful regiment, Colonel."

"More brave than beautiful, Sire," replied Colonel Harispé.

"We shall see," said the Emperor.

The colonel's words were triumphantly borne out during the course of that day, and he himself was created General on the field. That night he was carried wounded to Napoleon to offer the homage of his three brothers, who had been killed in the thick of the fray. Maréchal Harispé is the soldier hero of the Basques, who will never forget how their famous countryman defended the land he loved so well. He died at the age of eighty-six.

At Larceveau the Mauléon road enters the Bidouze

valley, which it crosses to climb slopes shaded by chestnut trees and oaks. The little town of St. Just is passed, and the road then ascends through a melancholy stretch until, in its last curves, it reveals the great horizons of the Sauveterre plateau and the plains of Bearn. Now begins what is, perhaps, the noblest part of the journey.

Between Bidouze and Le Saison rises the Col d'Osquish, and diverging on the right is a little path leading to a chapel dedicated to St. Antony. Here there is a marvellous view embracing the Soule, Orhy and Anie heights, with the valleys between, soft and luxuriant; and rippling edges of blue range upon range connecting up the heights. The world is bathed in shades of blue and white. Even the greens of the valley from here are a soft, delicious blue; the hills are a varied succession of mauves, royal blues and purple, broken by the white snowline, and backed by the quivering, radiant blue of the sky.

The route now descends into the Saison Valley where the stream is crossed. In a few minutes Mauléon, ancient seat of the Viscounty of Soule, chief centre of the pre-Christian Sibyllales, worshippers of oracular prophetesses, and present capital of Soule, is reached. My first act, on entering Mauléon was to seek out the Hôtel Bidegain, and instal myself. I chose the Bidegain because I had read the following account of it in Mrs. Oakley's *Hill Towns of the Pyrenees*, and I think it will be readily agreed that no inducement could be more compelling:

"Upon the street of Navarre at Mauléon stands a hotel whose memory is to me wreathed in rose colours, for Mauléon was our first stopping-place in the Pays Basque, and this was our first experience of a Basque inn. Fancy an inn whose water-coolers are glistening antique cruches—the brass-bound *ferratas* of the Basques—whose courtyard is a scene from 'Chantecler,' whose

kitchen—where Basquaises wield polished copper pots and pans—forms an ornamental appendage to adjacent dining room. Fancy an inn where *pelota*-players congregate, where *chisteras*—the scoop-shaped basket-gloves used to catch the ball in the Basque game—lie upon chairs and tables . . . common as tennis-rackets at a country club. Fancy an inn a mere step from an avenue of horse-chestnuts and lindens which shade the *fronton* or *pelota*-court. Fancy an inn which faces a vast and rambling edifice of the Renaissance, the Château d'Andurrain, and you have the Hôtel Bidegain."

This account gives no indications of the food supplied, or the softness of the beds, but one feels pretty sure that an inn which can inspire such a paragraph must be in all degrees excellent. And, indeed, it was so. That is a feature of the Pyrenees. Nowhere in France will you find better inns. In the remotest places they are acceptable, and frequently they are exquisite. There is no other word for some half a dozen which I specially remember.

Mauléon is wholly Basque ; and very beautiful and quiet and gracious. There is age marked in all its features. But the age of a life spent vigorously, amid fine incidents. It bears the trace of a pride which is truly Basque, that pride which traces the Basque origin direct to an honoured tribe of Israel, and claims its tongue to be identical with that which Eve spoke to Adam ; that pride which makes a true Basque exclaim : " What ! know you not that it was a Basque, one Jean de Biscaye, who first discovered America and gave the secret to Columbus ? And that even Columbus was obliged to man his ship with Basques ? Know you not the Basques harpooned the whale in Newfoundland waters, and settled Canada ? " If you claim ignorance of their history you will be still further abashed by some such proud reply as this : " Sir, the Basques are like good women : they have no history ! "

So we need not bother our heads, whilst at Mauléon, with the history of the Basques. Rather let us take a walk along Les Allées, or, as it is also called, the Promenade des Tilleuls, beneath the leaves of magnificent lindens, and the spreading glory of an elm which has achieved prodigious height. On the left of this avenue is the quaintest building in Mauléon. It is called the Château d'Andurrain, a big place, rambling in a chaos of Renaissance stone.

It is a heavy structure, mostly of the sixteenth century, and still incomplete. The main building should have been flanked by four pavilions, but only three are there. The eastern façade has a very charming Renaissance portal surmounted by an iron balcony, which sustains some fine consoles. But the oddest adornments are the whimsical heads, almost always with comical masks, which decorate the long, southward wall. Many of the details are heavy, but some have the complete character of their period, and one is glad of them because of the gracious diversity they give to the austere walls. It is, happily, no lifeless château mourning its warm past; for a master is still lodged here, in true seigneurial style, and the gardens are well kept; there comes the sound of children playing; and at nightfall fine old equipages roll into its gravelled courtyard, and you hear the strains of music from its lighted halls.

There is a very pleasant square not far away, made all the pleasanter by the charming marble column dating from Henry II, which rises from the centre. On one side is the old inn, surrounded by fragrant gardens; and there also is the house of the sub-prefect, who is well-lodged, whatever his complaints may be. I have never discovered what were the functions of a sub-prefect, and I do not much care. But I judge it to be a desirable occupation if this house at Mauléon is any indication. Taine, in his sketches of France, very frequently com-

plained of the stagnant, futile life eked out by the provincial state servants. It is a life, I gather, very easily and agreeably eked out.

On a hill to the west rises what is left of the castle which formerly dominated Mauléon, and gave its name to the town ; for it was called the Château du Mauvais Lion, from which has derived Mauléon. The city still has for its arms a gold lion and three round towers on a background of red, which is doubtless an heraldic representation of the ancient town, and the ' mauvais lion ' who lorded Soule from its walls.

The ancient castle has lost almost the whole of its original aspect, and what is left are relics of periods as late as Louis XIV. For it has suffered many occupations, since the lords of Soule, in the thirteenth century, made it a stronghold of considerable repute. It was ceded by these lords to Edward Plantagenet, King of England and lord of Guyenne, and was still in English hands until the Comtes de Foix took it from them in the fifteenth century.

Here it was that the orthodox Basques, who have always resisted religious innovations, collected to organise defiance against the orders of the Huguenot Jeanne d'Albret, who should have known better ; for the inhabitants of Soule had already several times, and once in a dramatic manner, which I shall relate when touching upon the church, resisted successfully the adventures of would-be reformers. Jeanne d'Albret had recourse to furious edicts and persecutions before the new laws made any headway ; but it was wasted effort. A people is what it chooses to be, if not to-day then to-morrow, and never more certainly so than when conscience and body are outraged by those who would seek to alter their ways.

When Mauléon became a tenancy of Guyenne and Gascoigne, a lieutenant took up residence there, being

chosen from the house of Trois-Villes, who filled the office in hereditary fashion for a great many years. There is a dramatic Basque song [1] which relates the love of one of those counts for the beautiful Marguerite d'Espeldoy. He had a Basque rival, one Berterretch, whose attraction for Marguerite was evidently not to be despised ; so the count had the Basque put to death. The song, unfortunately, is not very clear, and I know not whether the count was a medieval villain or simply an honest lover. But I gather that the beauteous maid was content ; and that, in the fine, unmerciful days of chivalry, was all that mattered.

The castle of Mauléon, in recent centuries, has several times given shelter to garrisons ; and on the town side it is possible to trace the old walls, with their comparatively modern masonry. It became a stronghold of the French during the famous retreat, led by Soult, step by step through the Pyrenees, with Wellington on his heels. One frequently in these parts comes upon traces of that campaign, and many a village of the Pyrenees can tell of the time when Soult or Wellington tramped through its streets or rested within its walls.

The Château de Mauléon is flanked by two round towers crumbling to decay, and within its walls there is a garden. An old duenna admits to this enclosure, and offers to show you the underground dungeons and oubliettes, which—sad circumstance !—are the principal remaining vestiges. If you have a taste that way you will certainly visit them, and though I cannot give you any instances of romantic imprisonments, you may be sure that these dungeons have, at one time and another, admitted prisoners interesting enough, for whom a tear of sympathy will be sufficiently appropriate.

[1] *Chants populaires du pays basques*, by M. J. D. J. Sallabery de Mauléon.

From the ramparts there is a very happy view embracing Mauléon, on the other side of the river, and the soft valley that divides the round, wooded hills. These encircling hills form a somewhat sombre frame; but it is all very pleasing, touching the heart with an agreeable sadness. The town itself looks very quiet and reposeful there on the other side of the stream. You can pick out the pretty gardens, and the old slate roofs, slanting red and grey along the banks, all very mellow and drowsy. I wonder if it will ever achieve an importance equal to that of the days of the Counts of Soule? I suppose not; but in the last few decades it has doubled its prosperity and population by the manufacture of rope-soled shoes, called *espadrilles*. The natives of Senegal consider these shoes to be the 'right thing' and the fashion is spreading —who knows where?—through dusky Africa.

One of the pleasantest features of Mauléon is the old bridge, which spans the river. If you cross this to the other side, and choose a good vantage-point, there is revealed a seductive view of Mauléon; of flowery terraces rising from the river bank, and then the old roofs, shelving back to the taller slates of the Château d'Andurrain; at hand the river glides, but exposing fine white boulders, and, near the bridge, pent up by a mill and issuing forth in triple white sheafs of water. And the bridge itself, old and brown; but never a bridge yet, that was built of stone, which failed to give an added graciousness to any scene. It is not alone the bridge that is so picturesque, but also its complement of lounging peasants, passing drays, and little cavalcades of mules. The Spaniards, to whom these mules belong, have a pretty habit of decorating their animals with trinkets, bells and ornaments of copper that flash in the sun and jingle like the dress of an Arab dancer.

From the bridge it is an easy walk to the old village church, which unhappy fate has robbed of the three-

pointed tower that formerly surmounted it in honour of the Trinity. The church was considered to be too far from the centre of the town—at all events, too far from the residence of the curé—and a Gothic structure was built in a street off the main square. A French writer of a few years ago gives an amusing account of his attempt to enter the old church.

It appears that the hobbling caretaker had lost the keys of the gate which admits to the enclosure, whereupon a man in the road made the suggestion that passage could be found through an adjacent piggery. Let Monsieur Perret tell his own story :

" Singular vestibule for a church ! We follow the man. Between low huts there opens a dirty sewer, and there in the filth lie eight or ten enormous hogs which rise threateningly. The man had his stick. ' Oh ! ' said he, ' don't be afraid, hit hard ! ' He spoke easily.

" My companion carried his crayons and album for arms, I, as in the Marlborough song, had nothing. The best thing to do was to make haste and jump over a little wall which was strong enough to repulse the enemy. We jumped ; and just in time, for the squadron of fat pigs charged amid a chorus of devilish grunts. Once out of their clutches, I began fuming and blustering : ' Hullo, my good fellow, you have then at Mauléon a mayor who is something of a joke. A joke ! My goodness, no ! He is, on the other hand, as serious as a wall. He is rich ; he has no longer any need to show a smiling countenance to the world : he does not laugh. If this mayor is all for good, how is it that he allows so much filthiness in his *commune*, and this infection so near the church ? Ha ! It is not his, this corner. He does not trouble about it. He never thinks that if a child were to try to enter this yard, it would be devoured by these fearful beasts.'

" My companion laughed ; so much so that the good

woman who had lost the key of the gate of the meadow came to join us and to tell him that there was another way. Most of my indignation against this negligent mayor became useless. We had not taken the right way ; and it is thus that error, which often engenders contempt for law, had led us to violate the domicile of the hogs."

The church has been sufficiently demolished to have lost a great deal of its character, and that seems a pity ; for when the writer I have quoted above visited Mauléon he found, in this pleasant meadow, a typical Basque church with, however, some unusual circumstances. Tombstones formed the steps which led into the church, and the floor of the nave descended recklessly into the earth. " What wretchedness ! " exclaims our author, who seems to have been a little peppery. " Is it indeed possible that a village so devotedly Catholic can permit God to be so ill-housed ? " The old lady to whom he addressed his indignation appears to have been undisturbed. " God," she replied, " has patience. Another church is being considered." God's patience has had its reward in the new Gothic church, and it is not for me to say that I could worship Him better in the ruinous old chapel than in the bright, new building near the main square.

In the time of the Huguenot queen, Jeanne d'Albret, there occurred in the church of Mauléon an incident which showed unmistakably the temper of these Basques towards reform. Roussel, Bishop of Oloron, established in his place by the Queen, signified his intention to preach the new doctrines in the church of Mauléon. A notable of that town, one Arnaud Maytie, at once informed the bishop that his new-fangled ideas would receive short shrift at Mauléon, and he were well advised to keep silent. The bishop took no heed of this warning and duly preached in the church. In the midst of his discourse Maytie, who had hidden an axe in his pew,

suddenly rushed out and began hacking the pulpit to pieces, many members of the congregation assisting him. Presently the uproar in the church was added to by the sound of the crashing pulpit and the groans of the injured and outraged bishop. Roussel's friends quickly conveyed him to his seat at Oloron and thence to Les Eaux-Chaudes ; but all to no purpose : in a few months the unorthodox bishop died as the result of his wounds.

XVIII

THE VALLEY OF THE OSSAU.

I CONTEMPLATED rather a roundabout journey. It lay from Eaux-Bonnes to Arudy, and then to Oloron, from Oloron to Sauveterre ; from Sauveterre to Puyoô, and so to Bayonne. At first I proposed to walk it, following as near as possible the directions and advice given by Mr. Belloc in his *Pyrenees* ; but that proved to be too ambitious for the time I had at my disposal. I should advise anyone else to use his feet in preference to any other mode of travel, wherever possible in the Pyrenees. It will probably come as an anti-climax when I say that I used the railway for the whole journey ; but there it is. I gave up all thought of feet, mules and motor-cars, and surrendered myself to the unheroic care of the *Chemins de Fer du Midi*, which are cheap, expeditious and not uncomfortable.

Les Eaux-Bonnes is one of the pleasant, international resorts which are abundantly found throughout France. It maintains an atmosphere of elegant seclusion ; but there are plenty of people there in the season, and many of one's own class and nationality. It is therefore easy, under normal circumstances, to keep amused. The air is bright and vivacious, the people active and free, the entertainment luxurious and Lydian—one asks no more and it is a stubborn heart that fails to respond to it !

From Eaux-Bonnes there is a motor omnibus to Laruns. It is there you must take the train for Buzy. But let us, for a moment, observe this little town. Here

we shall see the Pyrenean taste for picturesque adornment brought to its perfection; for the fête at Laruns is one of the merriest and prettiest in all France. It is held every year in honour of the assumption of the Virgin. For this fête, if for nothing else, you should spend a day or two here. The inn is good. It is, indeed, excellent. You may feel disposed to lengthen your days there, and use Laruns as a centre for the neighbourhood instead of Eaux-Bonnes. That will depend upon what most pleases you—an old lady with a pig, sauntering across an ancient market-square, a spotted kerchief on her head from which the grey hair descends in pigtails tied with scarlet strings; or a young lady with a pekingese, sipping cocktails—very excellent cocktails—on the terrace of the Etablissement des Bains. *Faites vos choix.*

The Fête at Laruns is, of all fêtes in these valleys, the most celebrated, the most spontaneous, the merriest. It is a combination of fervour and revelry reminiscent of Les Saintes-Maries in Provence, and even more colourful. As with all such gatherings, the young girls are by far the most significant and attractive feature. Sturdy, and filled with buoyant health, they have also the dark, flashing beauty which owes its origin to Spain. See them scarlet-clad from head to foot, with shawls of brilliant silk brocade and lovely dark tresses hanging from their scarlet caps. The shawl is usually caught at the waist beneath a fine broad girdle richly worked, and the skirt hangs in deep folds, that curve from the waist like a huge, tropic flower. These fine creatures are led in the dance by young men with knee-breeches of velvet, and white spats. Over their shoulders are carried the bright, brocaded jackets, and on their heads the nonchalant beret. Nosegays are everywhere worn.

The shrill mountain pipes are sounding in the ancient square. In the light of the moon the tall, surrounding peaks seem to watch from afar, like

inaccessible Olympians, the gay spectacle of human abandon. The dancers gather, laughing, singing, giggling; out from the cafés, the musicians issue, to pierce the air, already burdened with a very torrent of gay sound, with their strident skirling. The night is given over recklessly to every form of joy which a merry people can devise, with dancing as the chief of them all. Such revelry seems altogether suited to these parts. The great mountains encircle; the dark-browed forests bend close. Cataclysm has carved the scene, so maddeningly beautiful now; cold, bare, cruel anon. The joyous nature of the mountain-folk, repulsed by the majesty and fierceness of their land, may burst like a flame when the occasion arises. And just such an occasion is here at Laruns, at the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

With this foretaste of the Ossaloise, one is well-humoured for the little journey on to Bielle. Bielle is the ancient capital of the Vallée d'Ossau, which constituted one of the independent valleys of the Pyrenees. At that time the valley was nominally under the suzerainty of the Viscounts of Béarn, but the decisions of its courts were final. Together with the neighbouring states of Bigorre, Aragon and Catalonia, it formed a miniature United States, very jealous of its privileges; and even to-day, the people of this valley are formally addressed as Messieurs d'Ossau. There is a wooden tablet of 1090 preserved in Bielle which gives some interesting statistics of the Republic's extent and population.

Bielle is now only a small village, old and comparatively unimportant. Its position as chief town of the valley has been surrendered to Laruns. But it still retains the memory of its heyday and treasures, in a room adjacent to the church, the ancient strong-box of the Republic. This box is provided with three keyholes, each of which is opened by a separate key. One of these keys is in the possession of the Mayor of Laruns; another

in that of St. Colome, and the third is deposited with the Mayor of this little village of Bielle.

There is a celebrated church at Bielle, dedicated to St. Vivian ; and of this an amusing story is related. When Henry IV had gone from Béarn to occupy the throne at Paris he carried with him a very clear memory of his home-neighbourhood ; especially, it appears, he remembered the fine marble columns which surmount the High Altar of St. Vivian's. These he coveted for the adornment of his chapel at the Louvre. He therefore wrote to the people of Bielle requesting that they despatch the columns to Paris. It is said that they replied thus :

" Sire, you are the master of our hearts and our fortunes ; but as for the columns of the Temple, they are of God. Demand them of Him."

The mountains in this neighbourhood are famous for their marble ; and just a few miles above Bielle are some important quarries. The most valued of the Pyrenean quarries are at St. Béat, at the mouth of the somewhat overrated Val d'Aran. Marble from these quarries has adorned the public places of Rome, and came again into importance when they were used to furnish the basins of the fountains at Versailles.

There was once a priest of this Church of St. Vivian who was greatly devoted to the chase. One day, whilst about to ascend the altar to celebrate Mass, he heard, in the distance, the sound of a wild animal. The silly man, without waiting to remove his vestments, dashed out of the church, called for his horse and dogs, mounted and set out in furious chase. Such an act could not, of course, go unpunished, and the hunting-priest of Bielle was therefore never permitted to call a halt. Still he rides, his vestments flying, his dogs barking, at the heels of the illusive beast ; and so will continue until the crack of doom. Several of the peasants had seen him quite

lately ; and if you find yourself lost among the forests you will almost certainly hear the yelping of his pack, which—cruelly it seems to me— is obliged to accompany the master on his endless hunt.

There are pleasant things to remember whilst at Bielle. These villages render the illusions of ancient legend easy to absorb ; for something of illusion seems to inform them also, their houses of wood and stone, darkened and weathered ; their fine spreading elms, that are taller than the very houses ; their old, primitive churches, so warm and simple in appearance, so homely and odd, with piggeries and what-not adjacent ; their noisy, clumsy geese in the market square ; their costumes, bright hued and expansive ; and, above all perhaps, the vast mountain walls that hem them in, and the great, dark forests that quiver strangely in the night, so that the valley is filled with mysterious murmurings.

The train now continues, through the fine, fertile valley, with the sound of tumbling water in one's ears, to Izeste. If one is an ardent fisherman one halts at Izeste for Louvie-Juzon, which has an agreeable inn (I am told) and is a splendid centre for fishing in the Gave. But as I am no ardent fisherman I continued down the valley to Arudy, which was presently succeeded by Buzy.

Here, somewhat incontinently, the valley is abandoned. For my purposes it must be so, but those who have time should investigate its beauties a little closer. There are easy peaks to ascend, and many a path through the hills, which will reward the traveller's efforts. He will come upon no important towns or villages. He will find but few buildings to linger over ; and the history that confronts him will be of that legendary kind which mountains, all the world over, abundantly propagate. But for all that he will be a lucky man. He will delve amid the tranquil solitudes ; he will see a world

unblemished and sovereign ; and of human kind he will meet only the herdsman, the driver of mules, and, if he is lucky, an enterprising smuggler from the Spanish side.

If you are simply scrambling about these hills and valleys, camping at will, and fishing where opportunity offers, then no special caution need be enjoined. You will always be close to some village, it will be easy enough to carry what supplies you may need ; and anything of a difficult character you will wisely avoid. But should you attempt more ambitious tasks, and set itineraries, covering a number of days and involving stiff ascents, then you need to be wary. Above all, you must have a good map, one which shows all the peaks, passes and roads (Taride's are usually the best).

Then you must allow yourself ample time, and not reason according to distances as they appear on the map ; such distances can be very deceptive. Secondly, watch the weather : there is nothing so annoying as being caught by a mist when in search of a Pass. Thirdly, remember that a path leads to practically every Pass in the Pyrenees, and stick to that path. If you lose it, cast about until you find it again. Finally, there is equipment, but I do not think I need say much on that. Take as little as is necessary ; but not less than that—woollen clothing, a spirit-lamp combination for cooking ; grease for your feet—these are essential ; and the rest will depend on your own needs and experience.

With that little homily I bid you good luck ; the train to Oloron awaits. From Buzy to Oloron is only a matter of about nine miles. The road runs more or less parallel with the railway, and I could have taken it had I wished ; but the hour was growing late, and I was eager for such food and rest as the Hôtel de la Poste could offer me. The only station passed was Ogeu-les-Bains, a small watering-place in a very agreeable situation.

I was very glad that I had chosen the train ; for so

there was still a bright glow from the setting sun when Oloron was reached ; and it seemed to touch all the land with magic. The wooded hills and far-piercing mountains were subtly luminous, as if they were formed of purple alabaster ; and they lay in an enchanted hush, trembling on the brink of an amazing extinction. Presently, from its darkened hills, the city of Oloron rose up, like rectangular marble columns placed together in a phantom design, its shivering lights only adding to the sense of preposterous insecurity.

As the train rolled into the little station the last glow of the sun faded, and a mauve twilight lay upon the city. Here the sound of rushing waters is perpetually in one's ears ; for the hill from which this feudal stronghold rises is riven by ravines through which the torrential waters pour to the valley. The ravines are spanned by pleasant old bridges which conduct to the narrow medieval streets leading up to the centre of the town, to the gracious old hostel which is not the least of Oloron's delights. The night had softened and blurred every detail of Oloron, so that the whole of it looked fantastic, and gave the promise of infinite pleasure in to-morrow's investigations.

I do not think I can say that that promise was wholly fulfilled. Infinite delight there was, in my daylight wanderings through the whole town ; but the number of buildings specifically interesting, from an artistic or antiquarian point of view, were comparatively few. Age and decay, with a sort of general aspect of antiquity, lay over the whole town, and some of the streets, like the Rue Labarraque, had a genuine artistic interest, somewhat *in petto*. In certain quarters, as, for example, just behind the church, in the Place St. Pierre, there were some fine old fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century houses, notable chiefly for the look of elegance and the finely-proportioned lines of their façades.

You are moving the whole time in an atmosphere truly medieval, even obviously medieval; but I doubt if a sixteenth century traveller would have given much attention to it: for in a world of medieval things Oloron would stand as something unimportant. For us, however, it is another story. Life has passed rudely over medieval things, and it has left this little town untouched. Now we look upon it against the background of the modern world, and it pleases us, because it is so old and stained, so quaintly unhygienic, inconvenient, so mellow and reposeful. Had it no definite antiquarian interest whatsoever, it would still delight you for a day or two; and I know of no place that is pleasanter to come back to, at the end of a day's rambling through the pretty valleys.

Oloron stands upon three hills where the two mountain streams, the Gave d'Oloron and the Gave d'Aspe, join to create a merry, tumbling river. The ancient town lies between the Aspe and the Oloron and is known as Oloron Ste. Croix; on the west bank of the Aspe rises Oloron Ste. Marie, and on the east bank of the Oloron is the new, undistinguished quarter in which the modern life of the town finds outlet for its labours.

At the summit of the old town stands the curious domed church of Ste. Croix with a deep-porched doorway giving access to the unusual interior. It is a very old church, and looks it; for it was built in 1080 by Centulle IV, Viscount of Béarn, under the direction of Amatus, Bishop of Oloron. It has a curious tower, which, if it were not so old and benevolent looking, would be regarded as ugly. The aisle-vaults remind one of the churches in Auvergne, and the quaint carvings of the capitals deserve a glance. But there is nothing remarkable here except the all-pervading sense of age. Within the church, when I entered, was a solitary worshipper counting her beads between the intervals of

wiping her eyes and blowing her nose, and I hoped, at that moment, that her prayers would be answered, though it might be only the strange illness of a favourite pig that occasioned them.

This is the most agreeable part of Oloron. Many old houses surround the church. Others are to be found, as I have already hinted, just at the back of the church in the Place St. Pierre; but these all have the appearance of subsisting only by the grace of good fortune. They look as if only a moderate mountain storm were needed to send them in wreckage to the ground.

From this spot there is a beautiful view over all the tumbled dwellings of Oloron to the fast-flowing river. It should be seen under the moon, or when the light of day is just breaking. Though you may not believe it, I actually did see this view at the break of one perfect morning. I saw the day come in a shy flutter of gold, as if wafted from the rosy mountain peaks beyond. Shadows flew before it like monstrous bats; and, as they passed, the river burned with white and green flame, and the housetops of Oloron were like pyramids of fire. Beyond the town the smaller wooded hills were black and mournful still, with a wispy background of pearl mist slowly shrinking into ragged threads as the blue of the sky spread and deepened. Over the town was a tender stir, like wind among reeds.

I descended the quaint Rue Labarraque, with the fine purple lines of the Pic d'Anie ahead of me, and presently I came to a bridge across the river, which I crossed to the quarter which is known as Ste. Marie. This was a separate town until the union of the crowns of Béarn and France under the kingship of Henri Quatre. Here rises the noble cathedral of Ste. Marie, with a great square tower, brown and grim, and a fine western portal dating from the twelfth century, when the church was founded. It is adorned by an exquisite tympanum, which is

of a character and delicateness rare enough in the Pyrenees.

Compared to the cathedrals of the other French provinces these of the Pyrenees are plain and solid. But their effect is imposing, and they have as great an air of piety as any other. At Ste. Marie there is, however, in addition to the tympanum I have already spoken of, a feature which would grace any church. That is the choir, a perfect thing, marvellously delicate, constructed in the fourteenth century 'Rayonnant' style.

Just to the right of the church there is a relic of the ancient palace of the bishops, a thirteenth century tower now incorporated in a hospice. This, very probably, is the palace occupied by Gerard Roussel the reformer, whose doctrines achieved some popularity with Jeanne d'Albret. He endeavoured, with disastrous results, to impose these unorthodox notions upon the people of Mauléon. I have described his end in the chapter on Mauléon, in whose church he received such drastic treatment that he presently expired. Thus unhappily died what was, in truth, a very distinguished scholar. At one stage of his career he met Martin Luther, and thereafter he tried, with what lack of success we know, to conciliate his Lutheran conscience and his Catholic ambitions.

I have already said how pleasant a place is Oloron to return to at the end of a day's ramble through the valleys. That would suggest, as indeed it is meant to suggest, that the valleys of the Aspe and the Oloron are well worth visiting. The Aspe especially runs through varied and lovely scenery, and many a day is well spent among its beauties. It ends at the Somport, a pass where the road bends over into Spain, dropping down to the pretty stronghold of Jaca, whence a mountain railway joins up with the main line to Barcelona.

A word, then, concerning this valley of the Aspe. It

is, perhaps, the most typical of the Pyrenean valleys, as it is almost certainly the most significant from an historical point of view and the most sequestered and delightful from the traveller's point of view. Since Roman times it has been one of the main arteries of traffic across the Pyrenees, and it was traversed by a great Roman road from Lescar (Beneharnum) to Saragossa (Cæsar-Augusta). Napoleon, who was great enough to acknowledge and imitate his Roman masters in practically everything he did, tried to re-establish that road, and, indeed, had an outpost at Urdos, where also there had been an outpost under the Romans. It was not, however, until the time of Napoleon III that the great highway reached the Somport, and only recently was it completed down the Spanish side.

From Oloron you cannot fail to observe the significance of this valley. It is a definite opening through the ranks of the Pyrenees, forcing a way, with scarcely any deviation, southward to Spain, and, as in all the valleys of the Pyrenees—more markedly than in most—it is divided by gorges into what we shall call a series of flat platforms, or terraces. The village of Asasp marks the first of these. Beyond this, another gorge gives entrance to an isolated and circular plain supporting five villages and surrounded by almost impassable mountains. It is an ideal spot for one of those miniature medieval republics, like Andorra; and is sufficiently self-contained to have had its local laws and customs preserved by edict of the King's Court towards the end of the Middle Ages.

The chief of these settlements is Bedous, which stands upon the main route and has recently been connected up with Pau by railway. A very pleasant little place it is, gradually assuming an air of some importance, though still chiefly noted for such uninspiring products as the *herrade*, a vessel constructed from the wood of the yew.

If you intend to explore the valley thoroughly, instead of running up and down from Oloron, you will be wise to make your headquarters at Bedous, staying at the little Hôtel de la Poste. All the neighbourhood, so secluded and quiet and fertile, is a place to rest in ; and it is pleasantly marked off by lines of poplars, straight and elegant, their leaves quivering in the brisk winds that are imprisoned between the high, majestic hills.

But the true capital of our little imprisoned world is Accous, which was at one time the capital of the entire valley, then a republic like the Val d'Ossau. This is also an agreeable centre, with the Hôtel de France as one's camping ground. From Accous you can get across to Eaux-Chaudes through the Col d'Iseye, a journey of anything up to eight hours, but involving no hardship unless you turn off to climb the Pic de Sesques, which, however, from all I hear, is well worth the trouble. For myself, I made a point of keeping to well-worn tracks, and always felt thankful for the inhabited valley. But then, I am no mountain adventurer.

Accous is a very small town ; but in the minds of the people who inhabit the surrounding farms and hamlets, it is a place to be spoken of with pride and reverence. And just so, with pride and reverence, do you lodge yourself within its ancient walls. It lies about two miles from Bedous, an easy and stimulating walk ; and so you may spend to-day at Bedous and to-morrow at Accous if you have a mind to.

Continuing down the valley you strike the Pont de Lescun, where you take a road to the left, passing by an admirable waterfall. Now you come to Lescun, the best place from which to ascend the Pic d'Anie. This, and the Pic du Midi, form two isolated pyramids of rock which are the principal heights in this neighbourhood. The Pic d'Anie looks over all the seaward side of the Pyrenees ; for it rises to 8216 feet, overtopping

everything in front of it, and revealing such a view as can only be half imagined, so widespread and marvellous it is.

Now the plain narrows to a thin valley, which leads us out of this fine spaciousness. The road is carried through a deep, winding gorge, presently crossing the Gave beneath the fort of Urdos. This is the last French village, and mountaineers find it a splendid centre from which to pursue their hazardous delights. Urdos is the old Roman outpost I have spoken of, which later was used by Revolutionary France. Several passes lead from here, taking a full day, to Gabas, and then along the Gave d'Ossau to Eaux-Chaudes. It might be wise to push on from Urdos to the Auberge de Peillon, four miles farther on, and so leave yourself a reasonable day's run over the Somport to Canfranc, which is the first resting place once you are over the pass.

There is a circumstance relating to the Val d'Aspe which I cannot pass by. It is localized somewhere near Sarrance, about four miles from Bedous, on the Oloron side ; for in a meadow near the Abbey of Sarrance were told those tales which Marguerite de Navarre handed down in the form of the Heptameron. Perhaps the story of how these tales were conceived is more or less well known, but for all that I shall repeat it ; because it usually happens that well known things are so well known that very few people ever bother to find out what they are.

It was a summer of the sixteenth century. All the fashion of Navarre was gathered at the popular Spa of Cauterets, when suddenly there came a disastrous flood pouring down through every gorge and valley of the neighbouring mountains, until the plain was little more than a morass, and man and beast had scattered to whatever high places were at hand. Now a number of these people banded together and started from Cauterets down the valley in the direction of Tarbes. Alas, they were

turned back by the swollen Gave de Pau, the bridges of which had been utterly destroyed.

Some of these unfortunate ladies and gentlemen then decided to negotiate the range, and, succeeding, were able to descend into Spain, from whence they took ship to the ports of France. Another group turned West, and presently found shelter in the Abbey of St. Savin. Here they were informed that their good friends, the Dame Oisille and the Knight Simontault had succeeded in crossing the mountains to the Abbey of Our Lady of Sarrance, on the Aspe, where now they tarried. The others thereupon determined to follow and were fitted out by the Abbot of St. Savin with every possible need for their journey, including " the best horses that were in Lavedan, and goodly cloaks of Béarn, and abundant provaunt, and an escort to guide them."

So they came, " with great sweat and travail," for the track was very wretched, to Our Lady of Sarrance, where they demanded rest and provisions of the Abbot. This dignitary was, however, disinclined to help the wayfarers, and only did so " for the fear he had of the lord of Béarn, by whom he knew them to be beloved." He put on for them " his most obliging face, and led them to see the good lady Oisille and the gentle knight Simontault." The position of these refugees was not, however, much improved ; for the Aspe itself had risen to unmanageable heights, and they found themselves marooned at the abbey for a matter of ten days, whilst a bridge was being flung across the torrent.

Now, doubtless having in mind the famous precedent of Boccaccio and his friends, who were escaping a graver peril, our noble company, banished the normal pleasures of the summer time, resolved to meet daily and relate to the assembled company such happenings as they had either seen with their eyes or heard from the lips of a faithful witness. Accordingly each day, after Mass, they

gathered together in "that pleasant meadow that is stretched along the Gave, where so thickly do the trees grow that the sun cannot pierce through them with his rays," and pleasantly relieved their tedium with stories which have served a similar purpose, in a much wider sphere, since Marguerite of Navarre collected them into the Heptameron.

Enquirers have asserted that the Heptameron is largely the work of those literary gentlemen with whom the cultured queen loved to surround herself; but for all that it seems very probable that a single influence was there, presiding over them; and why not Marguerite's? The Heptameron is, of course, composed on the model of Boccaccio, but its tone is altogether different, and its charm, I should say, is greater. It is made up of seventy-two short stories, and is strongly characteristic of the French Renaissance—indeed, delightfully so characteristic; with a worldliness at once natural and disarming, and avoiding that Rabelaisian coarseness which, as Queen Victoria would have said, does not amuse us. The Heptameron has a poetical spirit which is very charming. It is easy enough to detect such inspiration on the banks of the Gave, in those pleasant meadows near the old ruins of Our Lady of Sarrance. It is agreeable, in this quiet spot, to reflect upon the life of Marguerite, she of Navarre, Angoulême, or Valois as it suits your fancy. A sweet and cultured woman to whom France and the world in general owes no small debt.

It is a long journey to have taken, with much to delay us on the way. But now I would return to Oloron, to lead you to Sauveterre and there abandon you. It is an easy run from Oloron, through country very noble and historical. A light railway covers the distance of twenty-four miles in a little over two hours, passing Moumour, which has some curious sixteenth century paintings, very naïve and fearsome, in its old church. Then you come to

Navarrenx, where stand some of Vauban's fortifications and an odd river-gate built by Henri d'Albret, the inconstant (according to contemporary scandal) husband of Marguerite of Navarre. Also a good reason for a halt at Navarrenx is the excellence of the trout to be caught in its neighbourhood.

Sauveterre is a lovely old place, the sort of town which would warm the heart of writers of medieval romance. It is wholly romantic, even to the ivy which clings to its castle walls.

> "Sauveterre, une ville bonne a devise
> A l'entrée d'espagne assise."

It sits, in truth, upon a height which overlooks the Gave d'Oloron, the valley of which it commands. This fact gave it, in medieval days, a singular importance, and we find it serving frequently as the seat of political conferences, first between the French and the English and then between the French and the Spaniards. A modern bridge leads into the town, which hangs above you, surrounded by fragmentary walls and topped by the stern keep of its ancient castle. The old, turreted bridge is largely in ruin ; but this, like all the rest of the medieval fortifications, is held together by a rank growth of ivy.

Sauveterre has several times been besieged, and at the end of the seventeenth century it was coveted by Philippe le Hardi, as a step in the placing of his nephew on the throne of Castille. Philippe, accompanied by the Duke of Burgundy and a vast army accordingly set off, and

> "Passet per Gascoyna, per la terra su gasto,
> Venue a Sauveterre ou l'endergnon el Gasco."

It had been a trying march, so much so that the half-starved troops were filled with an intense joy when they occupied the gardens, fields and vineyards of Sauveterre, transforming the quiet neighbourhood into a vast camp

with rich banners floating in the breeze and finely-chased armour reflecting back the sun. The chronicler has some wonderful tales to tell of the prices which the tradesmen of Sauveterre were able to command from their hungry guests, and, altogether, the taking of the stronghold seems to have been to the liking of the people.

The church at Sauveterre dates from the thirteenth century and is partly Gothic, partly Romanesque. In its time it has served as a fortress, but the crenellated walls which then characterised it have given way for the construction of a big square tower. If you mount this tower there is revealed to you a wonderful panorama of the valley, even to Mauléon.

A legend relates the way in which this church was completed. Gaston V, Count of Béarn, married Sancie, sister of the King of Navarre, and great hopes were held of the union. Gaston died a few months after the marriage, leaving his wife an expectant mother. The unborn child was looked to, by all Béarn and Navarre, as the final arbiter in the quarrels of the two countries, whose fortunes he or she would unite. But, alas for the schemes of mice and men, the babe was born dead!

The incensed barons of Béarn thereupon accused Sancie of having herself caused this terrible misfortune, and called upon her brother of Navarre to be the judge of her iniquities. Sancie's trial was held at Sauveterre in the year 1170. On the arrival of her brother, to act as judge, he was met by three thousand people assembled to ensure that Sancie would be tried by the ordeal of fire, or, if she preferred it, by the ordeal of water. She chose the latter.

On the day of the ordeal the king, with the lords of Navarre, and all the barons of Béarn, were assembled at Sauveterre, where also were gathered the people in great numbers. Sancie was led through the waiting crowd to the bridge which spans the torrential river. Her feet and

hands were bound together, and thus disabled the unhappy creature was flung to the tearing, swirling waters. But as she fell she cried out, " Oh, Holy Mary save me ! then shall I finish thy church at Sauveterre." She fell where the river ran deepest and swiftest, but by the current she was lifted back and tossed safely upon a bank of sand. Thus was her innocence proven, thus the knights of Béarn abashed, and thus the church at Sauveterre completed to the glory of God and the infinite compassion of Our Lady of Sauveterre.

APPENDIX.

ITINERARIES, COSTS, ETC.

NOTE.—*As hotel prices tend to fluctuate they are not given here; but, as a general rule,* $1.00 *per night is the most you would be called upon to pay. The* Michelin Guide *for the current year can always be depended on in these matters; and, where a prolonged stay is contemplated, you should write to the hotels for rates.*

1. CAHORS TO ROCAMADOUR

ITINERARY.

Cahors, Cabessut, Arcambal, Vers, Conduché, St. Cirque-Lapopie, Calvignac, Cajarc, Toirac, Capdenac. Figeac, Assier, Gramat, Rocamadour.

The railway journey from Cahors to Capdenac takes approximately two hours. In this book I have dealt separately with Cahors, Figeac and Rocamadour; but here I give them as a single itinerary, for the convenience of those who wish to visit all three. From Capdenac it is a journey of 27½ miles to Rocamadour, again taking nearly two hours.

I have treated Cahors separately. Now I shall deal with Figeac and Rocamadour in the same way; for to visit them as I did, and as I have written about them—to visit them, indeed, as they should be visited—one must take some time, devoting at least a week to the Cahors journey, and a similar time to Figeac and Rocamadour.

From Cahors to Capdenac you ascend the valley of the Lot. This is a distance of 45 miles, and takes at least three days' walking to accomplish. Four days is not too much to devote

to it. The two intermediate resting places should be Cabrerets and Cajarc. Cabrerets is not on the main road. You go as far as Conduché (17½ miles) and then ascend the valley of the Célé for 2½ miles to Cabrerets (Hôtel des Touristes). From there you may continue straight on to Figeac, a matter of 17 miles; but by doing this you miss Capdenac.

On the other hand, it is a good plan to go right through to Capdenac, stopping at St. Cirque-Lapopie (also at the Hôtel des Touristes) and Cajarc. Then, from Capdenac to Rocamadour you pass Figeac, and may visit the Célé valley from there. At Cajarc, the Hôtel Moderne et de la Croix Blanche is acceptable.

Here again your expenses will be little more than $1.25 per day, and your equipment of the lightest.

There are several interesting excursions to be made from Capdenac. A railway journey of about 2½ hours takes you to Rodez, the chief town of the Department of the Aveyron and the ancient capital of Rouergue. There is much of interest to be seen here, especially the cathedral.—The line to Rodez passes the industrial centre of Decazeville, whence a motor omnibus, costing 6 francs for the journey of 16 miles, runs to Conques, a quaint old village with a primitive inn, called the Hôtel Ste. Foy. Conques used to be the seat of an extremely powerful abbey founded in the eighth century, and preserves the beautiful old church of Ste. Foy, as well as three old gates and some interesting fourteenth century houses. It is well worth a visit, but don't look for any luxury at the inn.—A picturesque road from Capdenac ascends the Valley of the Lot to Entryagues, magnificently situated at the junction of the Lot and the Truyère. Here the Hôtel Lion d'Or will prove acceptable.

At Rocamadour there are several hotels, but the *des Voyageurs* is the one usually made for, and is perhaps the most convenient. From Rocamadour there are motor coaches in summer to Lacave, going thence, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, to Martel and Souillac; and on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, to Padriac, Autoire and Montvalent; and on Fridays to Gramat, the Grotte de Presque, St. Céré and Loubressac. There are daily motor-coaches to Padriac; and thence to St. Céré. There are also automobile trips arranged by the Paris-Orleans Railways during the season. These cover (1) Martel, Souillac, Belcastel, Caves of Lacave (one day); (2) Gramat, Autoire Gorges, St. Céré, Château of Mintal; Grotto of Presque (half day); (3) a six days' excursion to the Rouergue and Gorges of the Tarn.

Hotels:

Cahors: Terminus Hotel: Des Ambassadeurs: De l'Europe.
Cajarc: Moderne et de la Croix Blanche.
Capdenac-Gare: Buffet de la Gare (inn).
Figeac: Moderne et des Voyageurs: Terminus.
Gramat: De Bordeaux: 20 comfortable bedrooms.
Rocamadour: Hôtel des Voyageurs: Ste-Marie: Notre Dame: Du Lion d'Or: St. Amadour: Des Pèlerins.

TIME

From Paris to Cahors, about ten hours.
From Cahors to Rocamadour, about 3¼ hours (by train).
Paris-Orleans Motor Cars (from July 3rd to September 19th), run to Rocamadour from Cahors, going via Cabrerets and Marcilhac. Fare 80 frs. (if there are vacant seats).

2. CAHORS AND THE VALLEY OF THE LOT

For this region you cannot do better than make Cahors your headquarters. Its hotels are quite cheap and very comfortable, and the staff is polite to you, which is worth a great deal. And the town is big enough for you to be able to shop satisfactorily if you have a wish to. It is a point whence the Lot may be traversed in both directions. There are four main routes radiating from it, and any number of lesser routes. The principal trips made from Cahors are:

(1) *Cahors to Capdenac,* a matter of 45 miles accomplished by rail in about two hours; and with an omnibus ascending the beautiful valley of the Célé. I have described most of this in Chapter II.

(2) *Cahors to Monsempron-Libos,* by rail in about 1½ hours. This run takes you through some very interesting parts —Mercuès, with a thirteenth century castle; Luzech with some agreeable churches; Castlefranc, one of the old "bastides" (see Chapter V on Domme), Puy l'Evêque, hardly worth a halt though its keep is interesting; Fumel (Hôtel de la Poste) with what is probably the finest ruined stronghold in this part of France (there are, of course, strongholds everywhere along both banks of the river, all the way from Cahors); and Monsempron-Libos, where you strike the main line from Limoges to Agen or Bordeaux via Perigueux.

The Lot Valley deserves very thorough exploration, for it is one of the pleasantest in France. You are never at a loss for a

decent inn, the roads and paths are reasonable; and you are never very far from a main line.

The direct way to reach Cahors is by the Paris-Toulouse line via Limoges, the latter being an extremely interesting town. Then there is Uzerche, very picturesque. Brive in the smiling Valley of the Corrèze, and Souillac, of which I have something to say in Chapter V.

Hotels:

Terminus Hotel; Des Ambassadeurs; De l'Europe.

Fares from Paris to Cahors—1st class 272.10 frs.; 2nd class 183.85 frs. *Time* from Paris to Cahors about ten hours.

3. LE BUISSON TO SOUILLAC

ITINERARY.

Le Buisson, Siorac, St. Cyprien, Castelnaud-Fayrac, Vézac, Sarlat, Carsac, Calviac, Carlux, Cazoulès, Souillac.

From Le Buisson to Souillac by rail is a distance of 38 miles, taking about 2½ hours. The road is about 45 miles, and is far preferable. It ascends the lovely Dordogne Valley, and there are numerous detours which enable the walker or motorist, to visit the interesting villages and castles which dot this country. The road avoids Sarlat, however, which must be visited from Domme. There are no difficulties for the walker, and though three days is sufficient to reach Souillac in comfort, four days, or even five, are not ill-spent on the journey. Try to make Beynac (Hôtel Bonnet), and Domme (Hôtel de l'Abbaye) two of your resting-places.

The walker, on this journey, has no need to stick to the main road. There are plenty of paths which will lead him through delightful scenery, and at whatever village he finds himself there is sure to be an inn which will provide reasonable food and comfort. Above all, don't hurry. This is a region to linger over, and two weeks is not overmuch for the journey from Le Buisson to Souillac.

From Le Buisson you should visit Cadouin, a distance of 4 miles, for its remarkable church. You will have no need to stay there, but the Hôtel du Lion d'Or is acceptable. Also from Le Buisson you may visit Bergerac and Libourne. This is a very agreeble excursion of about 61 miles by rail, in under three hours. These are the places en route which repay a halt:—Tremolat, with a fine eleventh century church; Bergerac (Hôtel de Londres), a centre of the wine-trade, and ancestral house of Cyrano de Bergerac, the hero of Rostand's romantic play; St. Emilion, also famous for its wines. Here are numerous inter-

esting buildings, including the beautiful twelfth century collegiate church; the Château du Roi and ruins of a Franciscan convent. Castillon, not far from St. Emilion, was the scene of the death of John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, "who was so renowned in France that no man of that kingdom dared to encounter him in single combat." (The home of Montaigne is at La Mothe-Montravel, 2 miles north of Castillon.) Libourne is one of those bastides which have been spoken of in connection with Domme. It was founded by Edward I. of England. There is a fine group of sixteenth century buildings in the Grand Place.

The hotels and inns in these districts are uniformly good, and the wines, of course, are excellent. There is no need to call for a wine card and choose laboriously the drink you would have. Simply take the vin ordinaire, and unless you are a velvet-tongued connoisseur you will be quite happy. In the latter event, you will know what to do better than I can tell you, and a little conversation with the patron will initiate you into the mysteries of a wonderful cellar. You will still, of course, have the wine of the country, but that special variety which is reserved for the likes of princes and kings—and you, Monsieur.

Hotels:

Le Buisson: Host. de Bellerive.
St. Cyprien: De la Poste (an inn).
Sarlat: De la Madeleine: Des Voyageurs.
Souillac: Grand Hôtel Moderne: Bellevue et de la Gare.

(By road touching Domme):
Domme: Host. de l'Abbaye: Du Commerce.

FARES

Paris to Le Buisson—1st class 252.80 frs.; 2nd class 170.80 frs.
Le Buisson to Souillac—1st class 33.15 frs.; 2nd class 22.45 frs.

P.O. Automobile service (July 14th to September 30th); leaving Eyzies and proceeding to the Vallée de la Vézère, Campagne, Côte de Petit-Bout, St. Cyprien, Beynac, Laroque-Gageac, Domme, Sarlat, Vallée de la Petite Beune. Returning to Eyzies. Fare 25 frs.

TIME

From Paris to Le Buisson, between eleven and twelve hours.
From Le Buisson to Souillac, about two hours (by rail).

4. LIVRON TO VEYNES

ITINERARY.

Livron, Allex-Grâne, Crest, Aouste-sur-Sye, Piégros-la-Clastre, Saillans, Pont-d'Espenel, Vercheny, Pontaix-Ste-Croix, Die, Pont-de-Quart-Châtillon, Recoubeau, Luc-en-Diois, Lesches Beaumont, Beaurières, La Beaume-des-Arnauds, St. Pierre-d'Argençon, Aspres-sur-Buëch, Veynes.

The hotels along this route are all of them good, and the journey to Die, a distance of about 34 miles, is well undertaken on foot. There is a good road for motorists following the Drôme the whole way, and connecting up with main routes to Grenoble, Briançon or Marseille. The walker will, one supposes, keep to the banks of the Drôme, with such little diversions as offer on the way, and very pleasant he will find it. Crest makes a good stopping-place; and then Saillans (Hôtel Plumel). Saillans itself is a delightful old place, adjacent to the Forest of Saou. From it there is an omnibus to St. Nazaire-le-Desert, in the valley of the Roanne. It is a wild, inhospitable region, a barren plateau swept by winds and ravaged by torrents. It is only a matter of 13 miles on from Saillans to Die.

From Die it is 39 miles on to Veynes. You will halt first at Luc-en-Diois (Hôtel du Levant), from which an omnibus goes up to La Motte-Chalançon (Hôtel du Commerce) via La Charce. From La Charce a byroad leads to Montmorin in the Valley of the Oule, the birthplace of Philis de la Tour-du-Pin-La-Charce. The next stop could be La Beaume-des-Arnauds (Hôtel de la Poste); and then Veynes.

At Veynes you are on the main line to Marseille; also on the line from Grenoble to Briançon.

The best centre for the Drôme Valley is, of course, Die, which is accessible from Paris (13 hours); Lyons (4 hours); Bordeaux (18 hours); and Marseille (6 hours). The specialties of Die are Pognes, nougat and the famous sparkling wine known as Clairette de Die. The town itself is very lively and heartening; there are several good hotels, plenty of shops; both Protestant and Catholic church services, doctors, pharmacies and amusements.

The principal excursions from Die are (1) to La Chapelle en Vercors and Les Grands Goulets, by motor-bus leaving Die at 8 a.m., and connecting with the services to Villard, Lans and Grenoble at Les Barraques. This journey is made daily from 15th April to 31st October; (2) To Luc-en-Diois and Claps by railway; (3) to Chatillon en Diois (Les Gats and Regnaud

roads) by tramway. Of the mountains to be climbed in the neighbourhood the chief are Mont Glandaz, le Grand Veymont, Mont Aiguille and Pic de Sant Genis. Guides may be obtained both at Die and Romeyer. The easy walks from Die include Roche de Romeyer; Source de Rays, via Romeyer; Menil Forest; the Abbey of Val Croissant, via Salières; and the prehistoric grotto of Solaure.

Anyone walking from Livron to Veynes, would do well to visit St. Jean-en-Royans, from Aouste, which is the best centre for the Forêt de Lente and the Gorges d'Omblèze. There is an omnibus as far as Plan-de-Baix, passing Beaufort, which has ruins of a keep and a monastery. Soon after leaving Plan-de-Baix you enter the fine Gorges d'Omblèze. At Léoncel there are ruins of a Cistercian abbey; and at St. Jean you reach a good starting-point for the forest. (Hôtel du Royans.)

Hotels:

Livron: Des Voyageurs.
Crest: Grand Hotel.
Die: Le Martouret.
Veynes: Terminus.

FARES

By rail from Livron to Veynes—1st class single 53 frs.; 2nd class 36 frs.

TIME

Paris to Livron, about thirteen hours.
Livron to Veynes, under 4½ hours.
Livron to Die, in 1½ to 2 hours.
Die to Veynes, about 2½ hours.

5. VICHY TO LE PUY

ITINERARY.

Vichy, Ris-Châteldon, Puy-Guillaume, Courty, Pont-de-Dore, Néronde, Courpière, Giroux, Olliergues, Vertolaye, Ambert, Marsac, Arlanc, St. Sauveur-la-Sagne, St. Alyre, La Chapelle-Geneste, Chaise-Dieu, Sembadel, Lac de Malaguet, Allègre, Darsac, Borne, Le Puy.

This is a journey of a little over 100 miles. That is nothing much by rail, but on foot it is a considerable enterprise. Nevertheless, you will enjoy it much better if you do it on foot, allowing, say, twelve days for the entire journey. This will allow you to spend a whole day in the more interesting places, without calling upon too much of your endurance; for it is not

a hazardous expedition. The roads are easy and the walking good, while the inns on the way are reasonably good. The first day should be taken easily. You will spend the night at Châteldon. If 20 miles is not too much to ask of you, you will rest the next night at Courpière (Hôtel Philippe). The next resting-place should be Olliergues, where the Hôtel du Commerce is acceptable. As another stopping-place I suggest Ambert, where the Hôtel de la Tête d'Or will do its best to make you comfortable. Arlanc (Hôtel du Prince) is the next place, and from there you should take it easy, for you have the beautiful Gorge of the Dore to visit. When you have finished with that, go on to La Chaise-Dieu, and stop at the Hôtel Terminus. You will remain here some time, and then go on to Malaguet, which can give you normal comfort at the Hôtel du Lac. Your next spurt, which will be for a matter of 14 miles, will bring you to Le Puy.

In this walk you are never asked to do more than 15 miles, except on the second stage, from Châteldon to Courpière, and the average is about 10 miles. Thus, if you start early (and walking is always pleasantest early in the day), you reach the goal of the day in plenty of time to visit its peculiarities. This course has the added advantage of reducing the equipment you would carry; for you are able to take food in the village, instead of carrying it with you. In spite of that it is as well to take something—a piece of chicken, a boiled egg and some bread is the usual thing—if your way lies through any spots of striking beauty. This does away with the necessity to push on to your destination when you would fain loiter. But ordinarily your equipment is light—a change of underclothing, some grease for the feet, the food I have mentioned, a map and something to munch on the way—say a few apples, or some boiled sweets.

The expense of such a trip would be negligible. If you allow a dollar and a quarter a day you will find it sufficient. Thus a twelve days' trip, such as this, would cost something between fifteen and twenty dollars. The hotels, for our standards, are ridiculously cheap; and the meals they supply are always good, and sometimes excellent. In those hotels which have a fixed lunch and dinner, the food is quite good, and, of course, very cheap; but fixed meals are never very attractive. It will cost you very little more to have something you fancy. Ask the *patron* what he advises; usually, it will be something to give you the sensation of a Lucullus. But don't ask for American or English foods—*rosbif* and that sort of thing. The French will never know how to cook roast beef.

Autocar trips: The P.L.M. run autocar trips from Vichy to Le Puy and Grenoble via La Chaise-Dieu. The prices are indicated above. Unfortunately (for those who prefer the autocar to the train or their feet), these cars only stop at La Chaise-Dieu on the way to Le Puy. They leave Vichy at 8 o'clock in the morning; arrive at La Chaise-Dieu at 12.15; leave again at 2.45, and arrive at Le Puy at 4.15. From there they go on, the following day, to Grenoble.

Hotels:

Vichy: Grand Hôtel et Villa des Ambassadeurs: Des Princes: Cecil Hotel.
Puy Guillaume: Larnaut.
Courpière: Philippe.
Olliergues: Du Commerce: Terminus Hôtel.
Ambert: De la Gare (opposite the station): De la Tête d'Or.
Chaise-Dieu: Terminus.
Malaguet: Du Lac de Malaguet.
Le Puy: Le Grand Hôtel: Nouvel Hôtel.

TIME

Paris to Vichy, about 6½ hours.
Vichy to Le Puy (by rail), about nine hours.
Vichy to Le Puy (by P.L.M. cars), about 8½ hours.

6. AVIGNON AND LES BAUX

ITINERARY.

Avignon, Châteaurenard, St. Remy, Les Baux, Fontvieille, Montmajour, Arles.

This is, of course, a roundabout route from Avignon to Arles, and may only be undertaken by road. The road goes, however, through some of the most delightful scenery of Provence, and permits of an approach to Les Baux far exceeding in magnificence and dramatic effect that of the more customary approach from Arles. A motor diligence goes daily from in front of the Porte St. Michael to St. Remy, where it is usually possible to hire some sort of vehicle, from a motor car to a donkey waggon, for the remainder of the journey to Les Baux. From Les Baux one must either walk to Arles or make arrangements for a car to be sent. On the other hand, 2½ miles to the southwest of Les Baux is Paradou, and from there a train may be taken to Arles. It is best to do the journey in a leisured

fashion, but where this is impossible it will not be found very expensive to hire a car for the entire journey.

During the season the P.L.M. run autocars on the route Avignon, Tarascon, Arles (dinner), Montmajour, Les Baux (tea), Saint Remy, Maillane, Avignon; but this gives very little time. It is a region to spend days in. That is why I suggest that it be undertaken on foot or with such local conveyance as is available. Why not buy a donkey at Avignon and sell it at Arles? The walker will have very pleasant places to rest in, and need only be on the road for three or four hours each day. Châteaurenard has a good inn (Hôtel du Commerce), and is on the light railway from Barbentane to Orgon. From there it is about 14 miles to St. Remy, where the Hôtel de Provence will accommodate you. From St. Remy it is about 8 miles to Les Baux. Here the simple but clean and hospitable Hostellerie de la Reine Jeanne awaits you. After that it is best to go on to Arles; it is only 10¾ miles from Les Baux to Arles, so that the walk is easy, and gives time for the visit to Montmajour; and you will not want to linger at Fontvieille as there is only Daudet's mill to be seen there—a matter of twenty minutes' stay.

Hotels:

Avignon: De l'Europe: du Louvre: Crillon: Terminus Hôtel: Dominion Hôtel: Grand Hôtel.
Châteaurenard: Hôtel du Commerce.
St. Remy: Hôtel de Provence.
Les Baux: Hostellerie de la Reine Jeanne; Hôtel Monte Carlo.
Arles: Hôtel du Nord; Hôtel du Forum.

TIME

Paris to Avignon, between eleven and twelve hours.
Avignon, etc., to Avignon, 10¼ hours.

This is an ideal region for the intelligent and leisurely traveller, who desires to get some idea of the true Provence. It is a good idea to read Mistral's *Mireille* first. Then the countryside is familiar, and the customs of old Provence are explained. Of course, there is no need to keep strictly to the itinerary I have outlined. It would be just as easy to include Tarascon and Beaucaire, two delightful towns, facing each other from the Rhone banks. The trip could be combined with that to St. Gilles and Aigues-Mortes described in Chapter VIII. That makes it a long journey for the walker, but there is no reason why he should not avail himself of the light railway running

from Arles to St. Gilles; and the line to Aigues-Mortes. In fact, it is better to use the railway over those parts, as there is nothing to see in between.

For the Avignon-Arles journey it is wise to make Les Baux your centre for at least a few days. The inn is good and cheap, and there is enough of interest on the site itself and in the neighbourhood, to keep you busy for at least a week. Living in these parts will cost about $2.50 per day.

If you prefer, you can make Arles your centre. It is better than Avignon; but at Arles the hotel accommodation is nothing like as good; and of the two houses—Hôtel du Nord and Hôtel du Forum—I know not which to recommend. They are both in the Place du Forum. Arles is, of course, one of the most delightful towns in Southern France, and has good facilities for visiting the neighbourhood.

7. ARLES TO ST. GILLES AND AIGUES-MORTES

ITINERARY (By Rail).

St. Gilles, Le Cailar, Aimargues, Aigues-Mortes, Le Grau-du-Roi and back to *Arles*. Then to *Les Saintes-Maries* from the Arles-Trinquetaille station, a distance of 23½ miles, taking an hour and a half. From *Arles* to *St. Gilles* is 11 miles, taking about forty minutes; thence to *Aigues-Mortes* is about 21 miles, taking 1½ hours.

But this is an excellent walking tour, as I have already explained; or a bicycle tour. In midsummer it is inclined to be a little hot and dusty, and both St. Gilles and Aigues-Mortes look somewhat woe-begone when their plane-trees are covered in dust. For a walking tour, Spring is ideal; Autumn also, is desirable, as much as anything because it is the time of vintage, a time of gaiety and colour. Good road maps can be bought in Arles, Avignon or Nîmes. I don't advise walkers to attempt the cross-Camargue journey from Aigues-Mortes to Les Saintes-Maries. Remember the fate of Mireille. But the bicyclist should find it agreeable enough provided he can be sure of his way. Otherwise, I still think the best scheme is to hire a car, or to get a lift in some commercial vehicle running there. If Les Saintes-Maries had a hotel as good as those at Arles I would advise staying there and returning to Arles; I do not advise staying at Les Saintes-Maries. The best thing is either to go straight on to Arles by train, or to return to Aigues-Mortes.

In April, May, August and September, there is a service of autocars from Arles, covering, in the one day, Les Saintes-

Maries, Aigues-Mortes and St. Gilles. It is better to take these circuit trips than to miss the visit altogether.

These are the hotels:

St. Gilles: Hôtel du Globe: (It serves, at a pinch; and has a very courteous and helpful proprietress; but I don't recommend it).

Aigues-Mortes: Hôtel St. Louis (better than anything at Arles).

Le Grau du Roi: Hôtel d'Angleterre (catering for summer visitors from Arles and Nîmes).

Les Saintes-Maries: Hôtel de la Plage; Hôtel du Commerce. (These are the names, and if you really must stay a night at Les Saintes, I should choose the Hôtel de la Plage, but I don't recommend either.)

From Arles to St. Gilles is a walk of 11 miles. (Nîmes is 15 miles from St. Gilles; there is an electric railway.) It is 21 miles on to St. Gilles, a good long walk on a hot day.

The cost of the hotels, meals and wine included, would average about $2.50 per day.

8. ARLES TO MARSEILLE VIA MARTIGUES

ITINERARY.

Arles, St. Martin du Crau, Miramas, Istras, Fos-sur-Mer, Port de Bouc, Martigues, L'Estaque, Marseille.

From Arles to Miramas, on the main P.L.M. line is a journey of 20½ miles, taking about forty minutes. Thence to Marseille it is 45 miles, and usually takes about 2½ hours. It is a desirable journey for anyone who wishes to get a good idea of those extraordinary features, the Crau—a region of sheer desert —and the Étang de Berre, a sort of inland sea, with a few fishing villages, and surroundings of a curious aridity.

It is hardly likely that you will require more than a passing glimpse of the Crau. It is not a region to invite intimacy. But if it should attract you sufficiently, try to get someone to join you, at the time of the Saintes-Maries pilgrimages, and proceed from Arles, in some sort of vehicle, across the Crau to the village of Les Saintes-Maries, which I have described in Chapter 10. Mistral, in his autobiography, gives a delightful picture of a jolly crowd of Provençal enthusiasts traversing the Crau in an old horse-drawn wagon. You may be tempted to do the same thing!

Otherwise, you will see enough of the Crau by following the

itinerary I have set out at the beginning of this note. For the Étang de Berre, it is as well to make Martigues your headquarters, because its accommodation is fair, and it is, after all, a very agreeable little place, which would be better if its publicists did not exaggerate so. Port de Bouc is worth a short visit. There are boat-building yards and fish-drying establishments in the old port, and it is interesting to observe operations in connection with the creation of a new harbour.

If the desire is merely to visit Martigues (which, I repeat, is an attractive little fishing port, with all the paraphernalia of such and something else besides) then the quickest and most comfortable route is by the main P.L.M. line to Marseille, and then a short journey by a lesser line.

Hotels:

Arles: Either the Forum or the Nord. They are both in the Place du Forum; and one is as good as the other.
Pont de Bouc: Central Hôtel.
Martigues: Modern-Hôtel; Grand Hôtel du Cour.
L'Estaque: Hôtel Château-Fallet.
Fos-sur-Mer: Hôtel du Commerce.
Istres: Hôtel de France or the Modern Hôtel.
Miramas: Grand Hôtel.

A specialty of Martigues is a sort of caviar, called *boutargue,* made of dried mullets eggs.

The expenses of a holiday in this region would be very low. Not more than $2.50 per day, inclusive (it can be a very enjoyable holiday by making Martigues, L'Estaque and Sousset-le-Pins—Hôtel Beau Rivage—your centres). The region between Martigues and Marseille is exceedingly picturesque, and is little visited except by the local people.

9. MARSEILLE TO DIGNE

By rail this is a journey of 97¾ miles. It is the Marseille-Grenoble line as far as St. Auban, where you change for the branch line via Champtercier to Digne. The whole journey takes from 5½ to 6 hours and costs 46.45 frs. 1st class, 30.30 frs. 2nd class and 19.10 frs. 3rd class. Second class is quite comfortable, and, normally uncrowded.

Those who wish, may go by tram from Marseille to Aix, a distance of 18½ miles following the main road, and taking under two hours. The cost is 3.45 frs. 1st and 2.35 frs. 2nd, but trams are always a little tedious, and this is no exception to the rule.

The journey by road is a very agreeable one, but I cannot recommend it for walkers, although, to be sure, there are plenty of excellent stopping-places on the way. Only nothing much is to be gained from the walk beyond a succession of ever-growing ascents, and, doubtless, a sense of fatigue wholesome enough. The first day you would not walk farther than Aix, a distance of 17¼ miles. The next day you could get as far as Meyrargues, another 10 miles or so. (Hôtel Moderne.) Then prepare for 22 good miles to Manosque (Hôtel Pascal). Rest the following day by taking an omnibus to Gréoux-les-Bains, a cheerful little summer resort close by. Another long run will bring you to Les Mées (Hôtel Barras), worth stopping at for a day at least, because of the curious neighbourhood. A final spurt will bring you to Digne.

The rail route is Marseille, Gardanne, Aix, Meyrargues, Pertuis, Manosque, Volx, St. Auban, Digne. You must, of course, stop over at Aix. Meyrargues is interesting for its light railway to Eyguières and thence to Arles, but otherwise is not of much account. It also has a line to Draguignan. I count it a misfortune that I have never done that short journey. Lorgues, on this line, must be very fascinating. Pertuis should call a halt because of the fine ruins of a castle three miles away. There is a line from Pertuis to Avignon. Manosque is worth a visit (see above); and from Volx there is a short line to medieval Forcalquier; another to Cavillon via Apt (28½ miles) which is worth a visit. Les Mées, possibly; but when you change at St. Auban wait on the station for your train. Then comes Digne.

If you like, you continue from St. Auban by the main line to Grenoble, but that takes you far away from our present itinerary. It might be a good idea for travellers following the itinerary in the reverse direction. They could go from Nice to Digne; Digne to St. Auban; St. Auban to Grenoble; but the connections are bad.

These are the hotels, all of them acceptable and entirely reasonable:

Aix: Nègre-Coste, in the Cours Mirabeau; the Hôtel de France, a very simple place, but clean and cheap. The Hôtel Des Thermes-Sextius at the Etablissement Thermal is said to be very good. There are several good restaurants, but if you want typical Provençal food you will get it at the Bourdier, 26 Cours Sextius. Aix, by the way, is noted for its iced almond cakes, called Calissons, and for its sweet biscuits.

Meyrargues: Hôtel Moderne.
Pertuis: Grand Hôtel de Provence.
Manosque: Hôtel Pascal.
Gréoux-les-Bains: The Hôtel de l'Etablissement; or, less elaborate, the Hôtel des Alpes. The former is open only during the season, which lasts from May 15th to October 15th.
Forcalquier: Hôtel Lardeyret.
Apt: Hôtel du Louvre, or the des Alpes.
Les Mées: Hôtel Barras.
Digne: Hôtel Remusat at 19 Boulevard Gassendi; or the Grand Paris, 12 Rue de Provence. At the Thermes de Digne is the excellent Hôtel des Bains.

The prices are invariably reasonable, and one's expenses, fares included, should not be more than about $3.00 per day. They are thoroughly comfortable houses, and one is always assured of a personal treatment that is quite flattering.

In the region covered by this itinerary much interest can be found in the little branch lines and automobile services that abound. I have already mentioned one or two of the subsidiary railways. From Aix there are motor omnibuses starting from the Syndicat d'Initiative and proceeding to Riez via Gréoux, in connection with the service from Rez to Castellane through the Verdon Gorges; another omnibus service runs to La Tour d'Aigues with the ruins of a fine moated castle about three miles from Pertuis (see above). There are omnibus services from Digne to Barcelonnette, and to Marseille via Riez. The run to Barcelonnette via Seynes is well worth the taking. At Seynes is the Hôtel des Trois-Rois.

Fares: These are given in connection with the chapter Digne to Nice. The run from Digne to Barcelonnette costs 20 frs.

10. DIGNE TO NICE

By road this journey covers a distance of 93 miles; and by railway 94. Good walkers might enjoy a walking tour through the Basses Alpes, but, of course, the progress would be comparatively slow on account of the steep climbs. Another drawback is the absence of good inns in the remote villages and the uninspiring food. The thing for the walker to do is to make Digne his headquarters for a number of excursions; Castellane his headquarters for the Verdon Gorges.

The motorist, however, would have nothing whatever to

complain of. The roads are splendid. One would think they had been specially designed for the motorists' joy; and those who have not their own cars could hire them at extraordinarily cheap rates from the garage near the bridge at Digne.

Finally there is the train; and a very good train, too, though it usually serves a purely local purpose until it picks up a few tourists at Puget-Theniers, who are out for the day from Nice. The route it follows is not entirely that of the road, which I have described, but is exceedingly picturesque. It misses out Moustiers-Ste Marie and Castellane. But you must not leave the Basses Alpes without seeing these two places, which are connected by omnibuses with Digne.

The rail route is this: Digne, St. André-de-Méouilles, Annot, Entrevaux, Puget-Theniers, Touët-sur-Var, La Vesubie, Nice. Each one of these places is worth a visit. It takes eight hours for the whole journey, so that it is impossible to visit any of the intermediate places and complete the journey in a single day.

These are the hotels:

St. André-de-Méouilles: Hôtel de la Gare. This place is only 11 miles north of Castellane (see above).
Annot: Hôtel Philip.
Entrevaux: Hôtel Moderne (a passable house).
Puget-Theniers: Hôtel Laugery or Croix de Malte. (Here there is a Syndicat d'Initiative with licensed guides.)
Touët-sur-Var: Hôtel de la Poste.
Castellane: Hôtel du Levant (a good place). Hôtel du Commerce.
Moustiers: Hôtel Belvedere.
Riez: Hôtel des Alpes.

The period taken over this journey can be long or short as one wishes. Three days will be enough for ordinary purposes if the rail journey only is taken; but a week or a fortnight is profitable. Annot is a good centre. St. André-de-Méouilles is another, and this is a suitable place from which to visit Castellane. Puget-Theniers is worth a few days, and from it one may visit such romantic spots as Sigale, with its medieval houses and gateways.

From Digne there is a motor-car service to Riez, an old episcopal town; from there it is 17 miles to Moustiers; it is another 20 miles thence to Castellane. It may be necessary to hire some sort of conveyance for the visit to Moustiers and Castellane, but it will be well worth it.

This is a possible itinerary. By car or other conveyance from

Digne to Moustiers-Ste Marie (1 day) leaving the following day by car for Castellane, about 1½ hours' journey. Remain at Castellane three days to visit the Verdon Gorges, etc., and then proceed by road to Annot, remaining over the following day. It is only a two hours' walk, or a short train ride thence to Entrevaux, which visit, leaving that evening for Puget-Theniers, remaining there two days. Proceed now to Touët-sur-Var, and take the motor omnibus to Beuil (Hôtel Milou) if you care for a little mountaineering, returning after one day to Touët, and proceeding thence to Nice. This takes up not more than twelve days, and would cost not more than $50.00 including fares. The direct fare from Digne to Nice is 30 frs. 1st class, 22 frs. 2nd class.

11. NICE TO CUNEO

ITINERARY.

(1) The route from Nice via L'Escarène is as follows: *La Trinité-Victor, Drap* (tramway up the Paillon to La Grave-de-Peille, whence Peille), *Pointes-de-Contes, Col de Nice, L'Escarène* (whence Peira-Cava, a summer resort and winter-sports station), *Touët-de-l'Escarène, St. Laurent, Col de Braus, Sospel, Col de Brouis, La Giandola, Saorge, San Dalmazzo di Tenda, Tenda, Vievola, Limone-Piemonte, Borgo San Dalmazzo, Cuneo.*

(2) The route from Mentone meets at Sospel the route via L'Escarène. After leaving Mentone it passes Castillon.

(3) The Ventimiglia Route passes the village of Airole and San Michele and joins the other routes at La Giandola, just beyond Breil or Breglio.

This journey involves continuous climbing, and would be rather fatiguing as a walking tour, though quite good little inns are available at convenient intervals. A good idea is to take the autobus to such centres as Sospel, Breil, and Tenda, and explore the delightful neighbourhood of each in a series of walking tours.

As far as L'Escarène there are fine autocars running from Nice. At L'Escarène they branch off to Piera-Cava. But the entire route as far as Cuneo is served throughout the year by motor diligences which start from the Place Masséna at Nice every morning at about seven o'clock, reaching Cuneo late in the afternoon. They are quite comfortable, and often very amusing.

As these cars run daily it is an easy matter to stop over a night or more at any place along the route that takes your fancy.

These are the hotels and inns:

Peille (see above, Hôtel Montagne).
L'Escarène: Hôtel de France.
Peira-Cava: Grand Hôtel Faraud, or Hôtel Truchi.
Col de Braus: Here there is a very good little inn.
Sospel: Hôtel de France: There is also the Golf Hotel, a first-class affair, open in winter, but you won't go wrong with the Hôtel de France.
Castillon: Hôtel des Etrangers, quite acceptable.
Col de Brouis: Here there is an inn, not so good.
La Giandola: Hôtel des Etrangers.
Saorge: There are inns here, but as you are only 6 miles from San Dalmazzo, it is hardly worth testing them.
San Dalmazzo di Tenda: The Grand Hotel, a very excellent house.
Tenda: Albergo Nationale, also a good place.

The excellence of the hotels in San Dalmazzo and in Tenda itself, make both places very pleasant as centres for the district. I don't know which I prefer. Thinking only of comfort, I would choose San Dalmazzo, but then, there is far more interest at Tenda.

Cuneo: The Albergo Reale Superga, a delightful old Italian hostelry, rambling, spacious and cool. I heartily recommend its Piedmontese dishes.

The cost of these hotels vary slightly, but, including food, you will not be charged more than an average of $2.50 per day. That is the outside figure. I have done the journey on very much less.

It should not be forgotten that this is a frontier district, where passports are essential and cameras suspect; but the customs officials, though conducting a rigorous examination, I have always found helpful and courteous.

12. CIRQUE DE TROUMOUSE

ITINERARY.

Luz, St. Sauveur, Pragnères, Gèdre. (1) *Héas—Troumouse;* (2) *Héas—Gavarnie.*

Luz is easily reached from Lourdes. From Pierrefitte to Luz—St. Sauveur is 13 kilometres. There is a good route followed by numerous autocar services, including the service Lourdes—Gavarnie.

Luz is quite a good excursion centre, and the adjacent St. Sauveur is an agreeably quiet thermal station, with good hotels, a casino, and a reasonable number of amusements throughout the season. Both from Luz and St. Sauveur there are pleasant walks to be had, and the climber may make some comparatively easy excursions.

From Luz it is a distance of just over 11 kilometres to Gèdre, which is a starting point not only for Gavarnie and Troumouse, but also for excursions to the Plateau de Soumaoute (with a view down to Gavarnie and Troumouse), the Pic de Soumaoute, the Lake of Bassias, and to Cauterets over the Col des Culaous, for which, however, a guide is desirable.

It takes about eight hours from Gèdre to Troumouse and back again. A good idea is to make the journey by mule or horse. Two hours after leaving Gèdre you reach Héas, and from there it is approximately two hours to the entrance to the Cirque. Guides, horses and donkeys can be hired at Héas.

The route to Gavarnie follows the Troumouse route for about 1 k. 6. It is 8 kilometres from Gèdre to the village of Gavarnie; and about 3½ kilometres thence to the Cirque.

Hotels:

Luz: Hôtel de l'Univers (this is a T.C.F. hotel, quite good and reasonable).
Saint Sauveur: Hôtel des Princes et des Bains.
Gèdre: Hôtel de la Grotte.
Gavarnie: Hôtel des Voyageurs.

13. MAULÉON

ITINERARY.

St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, St. Jean-le-Vieux, Valley of the Laurhibar, Larceveau, St. Just, Mauléon.

St. Jean-Pied-de-Port is a journey of 32¼ miles by railway from Bayonne, the journey taking from 1½ to 2 hours, and costing 16.10 frs. 1st class and 10.45 frs. 2nd class. The railway passes Ustaritz, the Villa Arnaga, where Rostand lived, Cambo-les-Bains, a thermal resort, and Itxassou, an old Basque village which is the nearest station to the Pas de Roland. After Bidarray, which has a good hotel and good fishing, comes Ossès, whence a branch-line runs to St. Etienne-de-Baïgorry.

Anyone passing a day or two at St. Jean-Pied-de-Port should visit Roncesvalles (18 miles) where Roland's army was cut off

from the main body of Charlemagne's troops, and overwhelmed by the enemy. The road goes on to the interesting Spanish town of Pampeluna.

The main road from St. Jean-Pied-de-Port to Mauléon is that followed by the autocars of the *Route des Pyrénées*, which begins at Biarritz, passing Ascain, St. Ignace (tramway from St. Jean de Luz), Elizondo-les-Bains, St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, St. Jean-le-Vieux, Larceveau, and so reaching Mauléon after a journey of 75 miles. This section of the *Route des Pyrénées* ends at Eaux Bonnes.

There is a secondary railway route, leaving the main line at Peyrehorade, which goes via Sauveterre to Mauléon; then to Tardets, Oloron and Pau, so that you may go by *Routes des Pyrénées* from Biarritz to Mauléon, and then to Oloron and Pau by rail, or vice versa. The Valley of the Laurhibar, to which I have referred, should be made an excursion from St. Jean-Pied-de-Port or St. Jean-le-Vieux; but if you are a good walker you may prefer to walk from St. Jean to Tardets. I have never done it myself, but Mr. Belloc describes it in his *The Pyrenees*, and makes it appear reasonably easy. The journey there is nearly 40 miles, and may involve camping in a wood.

Hotels:

St. Jean-Pied-de Port: Hôtel Central.
St. Jean-le-Vieux: Inn: Garcia.
Mauléon: Hôtel Bidegain.

This is an inexpensive region for the traveller, whose total expenses need not be more than $2.50 per day; and a two or three weeks' holiday could be spent profitably between St. Jean-Pied-de-Port and Mauléon, particularly if one is given to walking. The excursions from both these centres are numerous and agreeable. From Mauléon the principal excursions to be made are:

(1) To Licq-Atherey, Saint-Engrâce, Gorges of Cacouëta and Holcarté—a distance of 20 kilometres. There is an inn, the Jaureguy, at Saint-Engrâce. (2) To Oloron (see below), by rail, or by road. (3) To Eaux Bonnes by Tardets.

14. VALLEY OF THE OSSAU

ITINERARY.

Pau, Gan, Oloron, Ogeu-les-Bains, Buzy, Izeste, Bielle, Laruns, Eaux-Bonnes. (This itinerary is in the reverse direction

to that described, because people are more likely to be quartered at Pau, and to be seeking excursions, than at Eaux-Bonnes.)

The line from Pau to Oloron is 21¾ miles long, and usually takes from 1¼ to 1½ hours. It is frequently necessary to change carriages at Buzy, and again at Oloron. At Oloron, the line goes on another 15½ miles, an extra journey of about 2 hours, to Bedous. Also, there is light railway connection from Oloron to Mauléon; and another to Sauveterre, so that Oloron becomes quite a good little centre.

From Oloron you return to the Pau-Laruns line which is met at Buzy, a distance of 9¼ miles from Oloron. It is 11½ miles thence to Laruns. The journey on to Eaux-Bonnes must be continued by motor omnibus. It is a distance of 3½ miles, taking about 20 minutes, and is an easy walk from Laruns. You turn to the left beyond the first bridge and join the main road just beyond the village of Pon. The journey from Oloron to Laruns takes about 1½ hours.

Instead of going on to Eaux-Bonnes the traveller may prefer to visit Eaux-Chaudes, which is a less-frequented resort (but rather gloomy), with its season from June to October. It can be reached from Laruns by motor omnibus in about twenty minutes. From Eaux-Chaudes there is a very attractive road across the Spanish frontier to Sallent, a distance of 18½ miles. There is a splendid view back when you reach the frontier line on the Col de Pourtalet. Sallent is an interesting little Spanish village where traditional costumes are worn.

This is a great region for those who are fond of somewhat strenuous walking. Some particulars of what is necessary have already been given in the chapters on the Pyrenees, but fuller, and more expert advice on this phase of Pyrenean travel is provided by Mr. Belloc in his *Pyrenees,* quite the best book of its kind that I know of.

At Eaux-Bonnes you strike the *Route des Pyrénées,* which you have already met at Oloron. I am not usually fond of these autocar circuits, but for anyone without much time to spare, but with the desire to get a good, general view of the Pyrenees, the autocars of the *Route des Pyrénées* are the very thing. This is the route they take:

Biarritz—St. Jean-Pied-de-Port—Oloron—Eaux-Bonnes (193 km.); *Eaux-Bonnes—Lourdes—Cauterets* (85 km.); *Cauterets—Luchon—Superbagnères* (142 km.); *Luchon—Saint-Girons—Aix-les-Thermes* (167 km.); *Aix-les-Thermes—Vernet-les-Bains* (119 km.); *Vernet-les-Bains—Cerbère* (134 km.). A subsidiary

service runs from Font-Romeu to Carcassonne, a distance of 128 km. The distance covered on the route Biarritz to Cerbère, from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, is 840 km.

Hotels:

Pau: Grand de la Poste; Grand Hotel (a little grander).
Oloron: Hôtel de la Poste.
Louvie-Juzon: Hôtel des Pyrénées.
Bielle: The inn here is quite comfortable.
Laruns: Hôtel de France.
Eaux-Bonnes: Hôtel des Princes; Hôtel de la Poste (cheaper).
Eaux-Chaudes: Hôtel Baudot.

All the hotels are relatively cheap. Pension terms need never be more than $2.50 per day, and in good places outside the well-known resorts the rates are much less.

15. PIEDMONT

ITINERARY.

Turin, Savigliano, Fossamo, Saluzzo, Cuneo, Mondovi (connecting up with Tenda, Nice (see page 313), or, Bastia, Savóna, Ventimiglia, Mentone, Nice).

This itinerary has been introduced because it connects up with the Riviera via Tenda, or via Genoa. Chapter 14 describes the journey from Nice to Tenda, and from there a tourist may follow the above route (in a reverse direction), continuing either to Rome or to Modane via Turin; or joining the Italian Riviera at Savona.

The route I have described takes you through one of the most attractive parts of Piedmont. At the same time, it is comparatively little known, and therefore has a charm denied to the well-defined tourist tracks. The accommodation is excellent—Hotels like the Tre Limoni at Mondovi, and the Corona Grossa at Saluzzo, being an end in themselves.

There is no reason why a great part of this journey should not be done on foot; but it is not a walker's region. The ideal method is to take the light railways—Turin—Savigliano (branch line to Saluzzo)—Fossano—Cuneo (branch line to Mondovi), visiting the neighborhood of each centre either on foot or by means of the local diligence.

Hotels:

Savigliano: Hôtel Aquila d'Oro.
Saluzzo: Hôtel Corona Grossa.
Fossano: Hôtel Moderno (Fossano, though interesting, should be avoided as a stopping place).
Cuneo: Hôtel Reale Superga.
Mondovi: Hôtel Tre Limoni d'Oro.

Here again the expenses average not more than $2.50 per day. Fares by rail and diligence are reasonable, and my experience has been that the hotels are absurdly cheap, especially in view of the excellence of their food and accommodation. This is, indeed, one of the most agreeable regions in Europe for the enterprising traveller.

FOR THE MOTORIST

I cannot pretend to give adequate details for a motoring tour, because I am not a motorist, and am therefore unfitted for such a task. But I know the roads pretty well, having walked over many of them, and, in other instances, having ridden over them by hired car, horse-vehicle or public automobile. That is why I have no hesitation in saying that all the places I have described in the foregoing chapters can be linked together conveniently (with the slight omission of the 'Valley of the Drôme') to form a route Paris—Pyrenees—Riviera—Alps—Paris.

The season of the year in which to undertake such a journey is an important consideration. It depends somewhat on the length of time one proposes to allow. If one month, then that month should be June. It should be completed before the autumn months. The Pyrenees are at their best in June. The Riviera is, of course, pleasantest in the spring; but some of the resorts are delightful in midsummer. The Alps, also, are agreeable at that time.

The itineraries which I have described fully in this volume, though not written from the motorists' point of view, cover splendid motoring country; and the only thing which makes me envy the motorist abroad is his facility for visiting so many wonderful places in so short time; but there are many delights to set against that!

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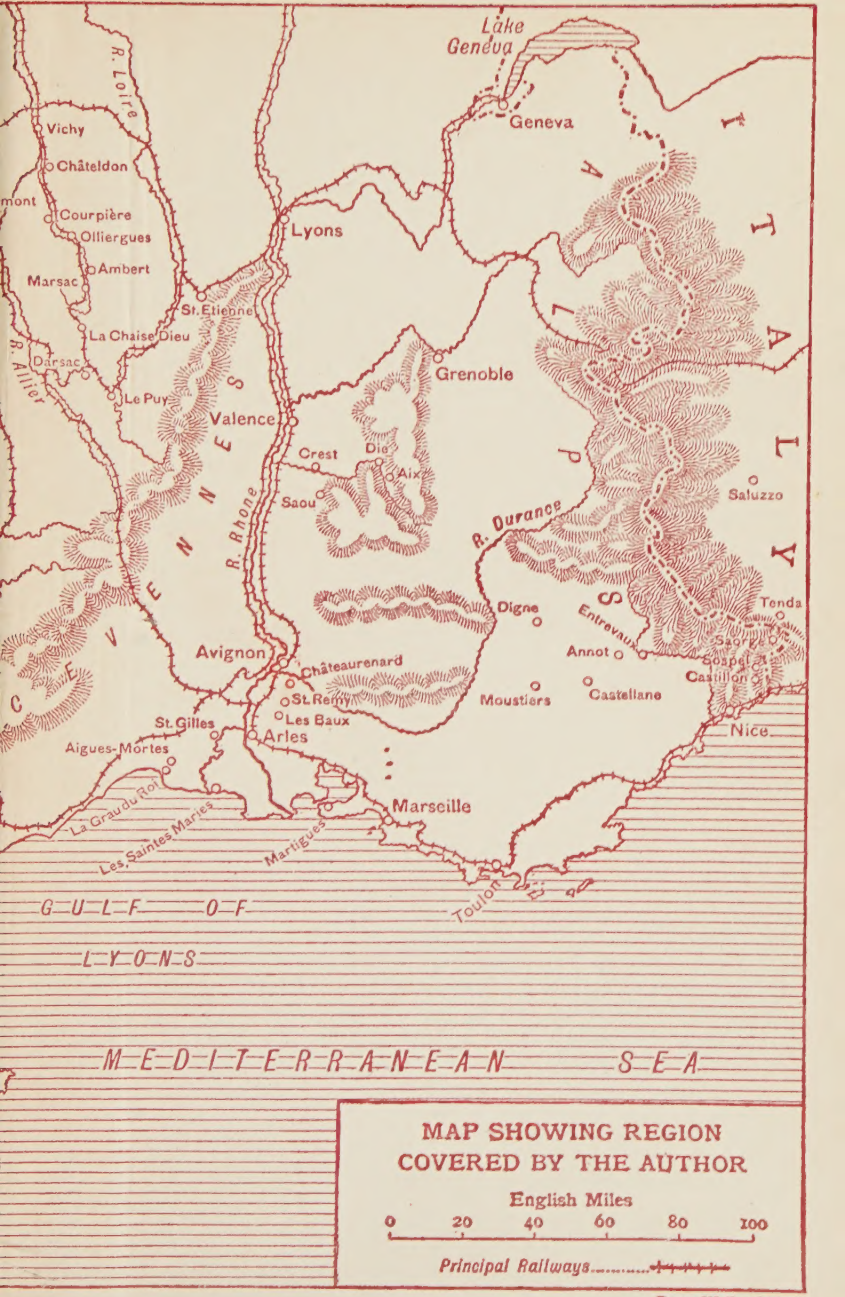

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